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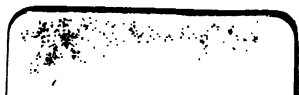
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JESSIE'S WORK



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She smiled gratefully when Jessie gave her the book, but the flowers seemed to please best.—Page 8.

JESSIE'S WORK;

OR,

FAITHFULNESS IN LITTLE THINGS.

A Story for Girls.

BY

MARY E. SHIPLEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE NORTHCROFT LILIES," "LITTLE MOLLY," ETC.

"She hath done what she could."

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JESSIE'S WORK.

CHAPTER I.

ALICE.

BECKFORD-UNDERHILL is a quaint, old-fashioned little town, at the foot of the North Wolds. It is not in itself very pretty, although, seen at a little distance, its irregular, red-tiled roofs, and massive grey church-tower, standing out from a background of rugged hills, have a very picturesque effect. Approaching it from the Lowford Road, nearly the first house on the left hand is a long, two-storied, white one, with square windows, set rather wide apart, so that the whole house has the appearance of a face with a vacant stare; there is a brass plate on the front door, so highly polished and smooth from frequent rubbings that only those who are not strangers can possibly make out the nearly illegible name, "Mr. Lawrence

Marshall," and the word "Surgeon" under it. In a sunny little side room of this house, there sat, one April afternoon, a little girl of thirteen, working very diligently by Mrs. Marshall's side. There had been the very unusual pause of nearly five minutes without any conversation, but it was broken at last by Jessie, who, looking up quickly, said, with vehement emphasis, "Oh, mamma, I do wish we were rich!"

"What now, Jessie? Do you want to be rich in order to do away with the necessity for having my old dresses made up for you?"

"Mamma, how can you? You know I don't mind that one bit; that is, at least, when they are small-patterned like this one. The girls can't possibly laugh at this,—any one might wear it."

"Not only a poor doctor's daughter," said Mrs. Marshall, smiling.

"Mamma, I don't mean this at all. I was only thinking that if I had half-a-crown a week for pocket-money, like Marian Francis, how much good I could do. Jane Powell told me that Marian paid for two poor little girls' education, and I am sure that is doing good."

"Certainly; but then, you know, Jessie, there are other ways of doing good besides giving money: time and trouble and kind words and looks most of us can give, and I have often noticed that those who have little to give really do more good than those who have much."

"How do you mean, mamma?"

"I mean, Jessie, that self-denial, patience, and perseverance are better things than money; and if the less we have of that to do good with the more we rely upon God's blessing on what we can do, we are more likely to succeed than if we had plenty of money and thought that it was the only thing needed to help others with. I think it is very kind of Marian to spend her pocket-money as she does, for I am sure she must go without many little things she would like to have; but I am quite sure, Jessie, you have the power of doing just as much good, only in a different way. The thing we have to do is to look out for opportunities—God gives us many—and not to let them slip by. 'She hath done what she could' is high commendation."

"But, mamma, now, wouldn't you really like to be better off?"

Mrs. Marshall laughed.

"Well, certainly, it would lighten my cares considerably if there were less difficulty in making both ends meet; for six great boys take some providing for, to say nothing of you and baby, and everything else; but, then, one can get a deal of pleasure out of one's numerous contrivances, and it is quite satisfaction enough for us when we see you all well and happy, and anxious to be good; and since Lawrence won the scholarship, and Tom passed his medical examina-

tion so well, we have really had much less to make us anxious, so that, on the whole, I think we are very well off."

Jessie did not reply; she was not quite convinced, but she kept the subject to think over, and, as it was impossible for her lively tongue to be silent for any length of time, especially when she had a listener so sympathising as mamma, she soon began again on a different topic. "Mamma, the toy-shop was opened again yesterday."

"Was it? Who told you?"

"Letty, when she was laying the cloth for dinner. Mamma, as you go to Mrs. Howard's this afternoon, may I go with you, to buy Lucy's little baby-doll? all wax, you know; at least, we might see if there are any at the shop."

"What a good thing you reminded me! I had quite forgotten Mrs. Howard. Yes; run and dress yourself quickly, Jessie; it is half-past three now, and I must be at Mrs. Howard's by four."

In five minutes, mother and daughter were on their way along the street, whose side paths, paved with pebbles, were not very pleasant to walk upon, though they thought nothing about this, having been used to it all their lives. The street opened into a square, tidy little market-place, with shops of various kinds all round it. Just opposite the street, as Mrs. Marshall and Jessie left it, on the other side of the market-

place, was the corner shop, with "Winter" newly painted in gilt letters over it. It was a funny-looking narrow slice of a house, with three windows one above another, the lowest one gay with toys and elaborate pieces of woolwork, partly done ; dolls of all sizes and shapes, and little brown pinafores half hidden behind labyrinths of red braid ; it was very gay altogether, and, inside, the glass cases of pretty things on the counter, and a packet of softly-shaded wools open upon it, looked very bright and cheerful. A tall, care-worn looking woman, in a widow's dress and cap, came forward as Mrs. Marshall and Jessie entered.

The wax dolls were difficult to find, for Mrs. Winter, being new to the place, could not at first remember where everything was ; and, as three other customers had come in, she asked the two first to walk into the little parlour behind the shop, while she examined some packages there.

At first the little room seemed very dark, and until Mrs. Winter said, " Alice, do you know where I put that packet of wax dolls ? " Jessie thought it was empty ; but then, quite in the corner by the window (which, like that of the shop, was hung with toys), she saw a low chair, and in it a little girl, netting. Growing accustomed to the dim light, both Jessie and her mamma saw that the little girl was very much deformed, her shoulders were very high, and she was hump-backed ; her face, though small, looked very

old and sickly, though she smiled as she said to her mother, "They are on the large packing-case in the corner."

Mrs. Winter asked the ladies to sit down, and Mrs. Marshall, drawing a chair to the little girl's side, asked what she was doing.

"It is a window-curtain, ma'am," she answered, untying a great mass of netting, which Jessie, at her mother's request, took up by the extreme corners, that the pattern might be seen.

It was very well done, and wonderfully clean, and Mrs. Marshall had scarcely done admiring it when Mrs. Winter found the dolls, and they were brought for Jessie's inspection.

"Oh, what darlings! mamma, look here, isn't this a beauty? the loveliest little face, and, oh! such dear little feet! Oh! I shall keep this, for I am sure I can't find a prettier; and look at its curls, isn't it a darling?" showing it first to her mamma, and then to Alice, in her delight.

"It certainly is: but you are detaining Mrs. Winter, Jessie; besides, remember Mrs. Howard."

The doll was half-a-crown, and Mrs. Winter went into the shop to wrap it in paper, while its delighted owner followed her mother out of the little room, after saying "Good afternoon" to Alice.

At the shop-door the two parted, Jessie going home for an hour's practice on the piano, and Mrs. Marshall

to keep her appointment ; but Jessie could not forget the poor deformed girl, and her thoughts were so divided between her and the new doll for Lucy that her practising rather suffered in consequence.

At five o'clock, the four boys came home from the grammar-school, and in the evening there were visitors with her mamma, so that Jessie had no opportunity of giving expression to her thoughts about Alice ; but at last, when she had gone to bed, she heard a soft step on the stairs, and her mother opened the door and looked in.

"Asleep, Jessie?"

"Oh, no, mamma, I've been wanting you so much ; I want to know if I may lend one of my books to that poor little girl at the toy-shop."

"Certainly : poor girl ! she looks dreadfully ill."

"I wonder how old she is."

"Older than you, I should think, Jessie."

"But you don't think, because of that, she would mind?"

"My dear child, no ! I feel sure a fresh book would be a treat to her."

"Then may I go to-morrow evening?"

"By all means ; good night, darling."

Jessie went to sleep very happy ; and all the next day during work, and lessons, and dressing Lucy's doll, her mind was occupied with thoughts of Alice.

As soon as tea was over she went into her own little slip of ground in the large garden at the back of the house, which stretched down to the stream giving the town its name, and there she gathered her choicest flowers, daffodils, wall-flowers, great crimson daisies, oxlips, and one lovely jonquil, these she tied up with a sprig of flowering currant and a most refreshing one of sweet-briar, and then, taking her favourite book, she walked to Mrs. Winter's.

It must be owned she felt rather vexed when she entered the shop, for there was Mrs. McIntosh, whose husband was the new master of the grammar school, and she at once began to admire the flowers so much and talk so fast about the shabby state of the garden at home, that it really seemed very provoking to Jessie, and she could not make up her mind to ask for Alice till she had gone ; but then she began :—

“ I have brought some flowers for Miss Winter and a book,” she said ; “ may I take them to her ? ”

“ Yes, indeed, miss, thank you ; she'll be very pleased,” and Mrs. Winter opened the little door.

Alice was still netting, and looked very much as she had done yesterday ; she smiled gratefully when Jessie gave her the book, but the flowers seemed to please her best, and she examined first one and then another with such evident delight that her visitor was quite satisfied that she had chosen an acceptable offering.

The poor girl reached a pair of crutches standing near her and swung herself with difficulty through the door and out into the kitchen, and as she moved Jessie thought sadly how deformed she was. She would have offered to fetch the water for her, but she had feared it might seem intrusive, and very soon Alice came back with a green vase into which, still leaning on one of her crutches, she began to place the flowers. "Now," she said, when her pleasant task was finished, "nothing could be sweeter and nicer; I don't know how to thank you," she added as she sank into her chair as if much fatigued.

"Oh, I'm so glad you are pleased with them. How do you think you shall like Beckford?"

"Well, I really don't know yet, miss; the fact is, I've not been out of the house since I came into it a fortnight ago, but the market-place is clean and pleasant. I like to hear the bells, too, and now these flowers will make it seem more like home."

"Had you a garden where you came from?"

"At Allanmede? yes; it was only a little square one at the back of the house, but the mould was so black and good, and everything grew so well; do you know, I can't bear to think of anyone else having that dear little garden, I have known it all my life."

"Is Allanmede a pretty place? I have seen it on the map and read about it a little in English history."

"It is a beautiful place, miss. It is built on a hill,

oh, such a steep one ! there are three streets one above the other, and unless you go a long way round and get the slope gradually, it is hard work to go up ; there is one hill where no horses are allowed to go up and down."

"Like the Steep Hill at Lincoln, I suppose?" interrupted Jessie.

"I don't know, miss, but then Allanmede doesn't rise out of the flat as Lincoln does. I noticed that, when I came along ; but when once you get to the top of the hill, there you are on the downs, and they stretch miles and miles. Certainly the town goes down to the river, and there are flat meadows on the other side reaching out to the sea ; but oh, it's quite different from Lincoln, though I think *it* looks very grand with the cathedral, but then at Allanmede there is the castle and splendid woods behind, and altogether it's very beautiful !"

"In which street did you live ?"

"Oh, in River Street, the one at the bottom, it led down to the river ; there was a great bed of shingle by the bank and an old boat, and I used to sit out there whole days, it was so sunny and there was always something to see, either the tide was coming in or vessels were going in and out (for although Allanmede is 'so little, it is a port), and then on the other side the meadows were so green, and in spring full of cowslips ; then, farther up, was the bridge and

the wharf—oh, you can have no idea how lovely it is unless you see it.”

“Whereabouts is the church?”

“Quite at the very top; you can see the tower rising out of the trees, and the churchyard is beautiful, so large and wide with a high wall, and trees droop over it, laburnums and lilacs, and there are copper beeches and all sorts of beautiful trees besides, and the wall is so old and thick, snapdragons grow on it and wallflowers, but they grow on the church as well and on the old tombs; and then blue violets grow in the churchyard.”

“But that is nothing strange, is it?” interrupted Jessie.

“Well, perhaps you would not think so, miss, but they are very rare there, you can get no end of white ones and red ones too, but not many blue, except here and there.”

“Red violets! I never saw any *red* violets, what are they like?”

“Oh, a dull, dingy pink, like the pink fumitory, but they smell deliciously, even better than white ones, I have often found out where they were by their scent long before I saw them.”

“Then could you take walks?” asked Jessie rather timidly, for she felt shy of asking such a question, though she much wished to know.

“Oh, no, miss, I could never walk so far, but I had

a little wheeled chair, and when dear father was living he used to draw me, and afterwards there was one of the boys from the national school ; no, I could never walk further than down to the river."

"Is it long since you lost your father?"

"Nine years, miss. I remember so well the last time I was out with him. It was on a Sunday. I have not often been to church, because the organ sounds so, and I cannot bear seeing so many people ; but that morning, I remember well, father carried me down the street, which seemed so quiet and deserted, and then up the Walnut Hill, through the woods, till we came to a stile, leading into some fields ; father lifted me over it, and then, after a while, we sat down. It was wonderfully quiet, and it seemed to me the very birds and sheep knew it was Sunday ; we could hear nothing but the tinkling of the sheep bells and the buzzing of the bees, and then the butterflies kept fluttering by, and sometimes the rabbits came out of their holes by the furze bushes, and presently father began repeating poetry, 'There is a land of pure delight' first, and after that some psalms, so that I fell fast asleep, and he carried me home, and I never woke till the afternoon, on my little bed. It seemed at first like a beautiful dream, till I remembered ; but I always like to think of it—the last time we were out together—dear father knew what the land of pure delight was before another Sunday ;" and here Alice's

voice faltered very much, and Jessie saw she was nearly crying.

"Did he die suddenly?"

"It was an accident; he was a builder, and he fell off some scaffolding."

Jessie saw she could not talk about it. So she asked, "Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"I don't remember my brother; he died when I was a baby. But I've one sister; she is four-and-twenty; oh! she is so good, and so pretty, too," said the poor girl, with evident pride.

"And where is she?"

"She is head milliner at Mr. Green's, at Norwich; she has just had her salary raised, she has £45 now; oh! can you keep a secret?" she asked.

"Oh, yes!" said Jessie, in great delight; "that is, I always tell mamma everything, but that's the same thing."

"Well, you know, Charlotte is engaged to John Fry; he has a water-mill near Allamby; but the worst is, they can't be married, because, you see, Charlotte's salary, great part of it, comes to help mother, and pay the doctor for me, and get what I want. Oh! I'm such a burden to them," said Alice, this time really crying. "If I only could do something, so that I needn't be such a drag on them; and it does seem so hard upon Charlotte."

"But you net curtains, don't you?"

"Yes, but they don't make much."

"Couldn't you keep a little school?"

"Oh, I wish I could; but then I know so very little; I've never been well enough to learn; and, besides, though I am much stronger than I used to be, I can't bear any noise."

"But you know some things—English history, for instance?"

"Only a very little; not enough to teach."

"What made you ill at first?"

- "The nurse let me fall when I was a baby, and that hurt my back."

"The horrid woman! don't you hate her?"

Alice shook her head.

"I've been sorely tempted to hate her, miss, over and over again; but then, poor young thing, she was thoughtless. No! I don't bear her malice; and when I can remember that nothing happens without God's permission, I fret less; but I could bear it all, if I could only help mother, and let Charlotte be married."

The clock striking seven warned Jessie that she must go, and after telling Alice she would bring her some more flowers soon, she said, "Good bye," and went home. When she was gone, Alice wondered very much that she had been so talkative to her; but then, after all, she felt it would have been nearly impossible not to confide in her, with that eager, sym-

pathising face bent forward to her so kindly. As to Jessie, she had plenty to think of in the tale she had just heard, and was wonderfully silent the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER II.

JESSIE.

THE half-hour from half-past two to three, which Jessie spent in needlework, was the only time in all the day when she could calculate with any degree of certainty upon having her mamma to herself for a quiet talk. Mrs. Marshall was very particular that it should not be interfered with, for she prized the time quite as much as Jessie did ; still, interruptions would come occasionally, and so it happened on the day after Jessie's talk with Alice. First of all, Mrs. Marshall was fixing gathers into the band of the frock Jessie was making, and every pin was a vexation, and postponed the talk, besides reminding the careless little puss that if she had only paid attention the last time she had done this kind of work, she would have been more independent now. At last the work was ready, and then Mrs. Marshall remembered she had left some

braid upstairs, which was wanted, and Jessie flew to fetch it, noticing as she went up that one of the stair-rods was loose, but not waiting to replace it; consequently, in her hasty descent, down she slipped, grazing her elbow, and giving herself a great fright. That was the worst, happily; and then, profiting by experience, she slipped in the rod, and went on to the little room: then work began.

"Oh, mamma, I want to ask you something!"

Was anything ever so tiresome, a thundering knock at the front door, and a sounding peal of the bell!

It was no good grumbling, and Mrs. Marshall was obliged to leave; and Jessie, wisely remembering her slip on the stairs, went on very carefully indeed, setting stitch after stitch in its place, not wishing to have her work to do over again. She was going on most steadily; but so, also, was time, and it was five minutes to three before the front door shut, and Mrs. Marshall came in.

"Well, Jessie, it was only Mrs. Howard about the next district meeting; now what do you want to know?"

"We have only four minutes, but I will be as quick as possible, mamma;" and then Jessie related all that Alice had told her the evening before, ending with, "And oh, mamma, if you would let me, I do think I could teach her a good deal in an hour every day; she looks quick."

It was just three o'clock, and, according to established rules (excellent things, especially for an impulsive, excitable girl like Jessie), she ought to be writing a French exercise, but Mrs. Marshall believed rightly that there were better things still, and she would not check the outspoken confidence of her child, or treat her kind scheme as a mere passing fancy, so she said,—

“Let me think, Jessie. In the first place, have you an hour to spare?”

“No, not as they are now; but if I got up an hour earlier, so as to do my lessons and exercises, then it would leave the time free from three to four, and I could practise then instead of the next hour, and be with Alice from four to five.”

Jessie had arranged her plan very nicely in her own mind, but mamma looked grave, and she asked rather timidly: “You don't think it silly of me, do you, mamma?”

“Far from it, Jessie; I think it both wise and kind. But there are many things to consider, and supposing you began, it would not be right to give it up, or even to let other things interfere with it. I am thinking whether you would persevere.”

“Oh yes, mamma, I know I should enjoy teaching her, and not get tired.”

“Very likely; but you might grow tired of getting up early, and that would put everything wrong. However much we may desire to do good out of

doors, our first duty is at home, and I am rather afraid, Jessie."

There was no need to say more ; Jessie's conscience told her that her mamma's fears were just, and she felt very humbled and unhappy.

"But then, Jessie," said her mother, kindly, "because one has been to blame, there is no reason whatever why one should not improve ; and dearest, if I could but be sure you would undertake this work in God's strength, instead of trusting to your own weakness, I should feel happy about it, in that way, at least ; but I must talk to papa first."

"Oh, thank you, dear mamma," said Jessie, gratefully.

"But I cannot give you any answer before Wednesday, I think. This is Friday, so you have time to weigh all the pros and cons in your own mind, and I will tell you what I think then. Will that do ?"

"Oh, yes," and Jessie gave her mother a grateful kiss, and brought out her lessons.

Mrs. Marshall had no wish to place stumbling blocks in her little daughter's way ; nevertheless, she had the best of reasons for considering well before consenting to the scheme, which looked so good and so easy to accomplish. Jessie had proposed rising an hour earlier every morning, and this her mother knew could be done, if only she would persevere ; but here lay the difficulty, for this business of early rising, or

rather lying in bed late, had been a sore point for some time. Jessie was not a lazy girl in other respects, on the contrary, she was extremely quick and lively, and whenever she put her heart into her work, no one could do it better; the thing was to get her to put her heart into it. She had a habit of dreaming over things, of neglecting disagreeable duties, while picturing to herself how well she would perform others of a more attractive nature. She had excellent abilities, and learnt quickly and well whatever pleased her, though she never gave her mind to what was disagreeable.

Miss Morgan, who kept the young ladies' school which Jessie attended every morning as a special favour, as there were no other day pupils, said constantly, she had no power of concentration, and her invariable prescription was, "plenty of arithmetic and grammar, and no poetry." Mrs. Marshall felt she was in the main right, at the same time she thought the defect would be better remedied if the motive power came from within, and Jessie learnt to do her duty from principle, because it was right. Meanwhile, Miss Morgan's rule, though it would have done great good if only her pupil would have accepted it rightly, only fretted and vexed her, and made her feel herself ill-used. She loved poetry, and in a proportionate degree disliked arithmetic and grammar, and she felt it hard that the time selected for her to do extra sums

and parsing was the very hour when the other girls were reading poetry. It is scarcely to be wondered at that the additional time was quite wasted as regards improvement, for how could she calculate or remember rules when her ears took in nothing but the well loved poems which were being read or recited around her? At least, this is what she thought; her mother and Miss Morgan both knew that it could have been done, but not in her own strength, poor child. Then about early rising: in the winter mornings when Jane called her, she would really mean to get up at once, but the first breath of cold air made her reflect how warm and cosy her bed was, and then she would think of benighted travellers in cold regions, and fancy the delight of finding some rough hut for shelter, and spending the night in safety and warmth, wrapped up in furs, while the wind, and perhaps the wolves, howled without. Then the prayer-bell would ring violently or one of her brothers knock loudly at the door, and she would find to her dismay she had dreamed away a whole hour, while every moment determining to get up.

In the summer it was rather better, but not much. There was a field across the stream, upon which her window looked, and very often she would lie watching the clouds, and listening to the larks or the thrushes, till she seemed to be making up poetry, which to her own mind, in its dreamy state, sounded very pleasant

and soothing, but when she tried to remember the verses, they were all gone ; and then it would be breakfast-time, and all the fresh morning beauty she had been dreaming about was past.

Knowing this tendency in her little daughter, Mrs. Marshall felt doubly the need of considering well before granting her request ; it might, if she undertook it in the right spirit, be a great help to her, or on the other hand, it might be a serious hindrance. Then, too, it was quite necessary to see what kind of girl Alice was, for Jessie was easily influenced by those she liked, and though her mamma was well aware that sickness and pain often refine those who suffer from them, she knew that it was not always so, and therefore, on the next day, when Jessie was at school, she went to the toy-shop.

After a few remarks on general subjects, Mrs. Marshall said,—

“I thought your daughter’s netting so pretty the other day, and I should be very glad to give her an order for a pair of window-blinds, if you don’t mind.”

“Indeed, ma’am, I should be very grateful ; but if you would be so kind as to speak to Alice herself about them, it would give her such pleasure, poor child. I believe it’s her greatest trouble that she can do so little to help.”

“She looks very delicate.”

“Indeed she is, though better than she used to be,

but she can walk but very little, and is so exceedingly weak the least thing tires her ; still, it's a great blessing she is as she is, for at one time we thought she could not live, and she is my great comfort."

"Does she have much pain?"

"A good deal, ma'am, but she is wonderfully patient, and never murmurs however much she may suffer."

"I hope you will find the shop answer; I see you have newer things than Miss Martin used to have, and that is an advantage, though she made a very comfortable living out of it, I believe."

"She assured me so when I took it, and so far I have no reason to complain; but it takes some time to get used to a place, and we had been many years in our old home; indeed, we should not have left it, only another fancy shop was opened and took the custom away."

"Shall I find your daughter in the parlour?"

Mrs. Winter opened the door, and Mrs. Marshall was soon seated by Alice, watching her delight as she gave the order for the window-blinds, and then looking out the nicest patterns. The lady soon forgot her first object in making her call, but as little by little she led Alice on to talk of herself and her old life, it became very plain to her that, ignorant of this world's knowledge as she evidently was, she had been studying better lessons under that great Master who

alone can make us wise unto salvation, and that in the school of adversity the poor deformed child had been learning patience and trust as only they can to whom the words "Take up thy cross and follow Me" are a blessed reality. When she rose to go and Alice's inquiry for Jessie brought to mind her doubts, she felt they were now set quite at rest, and had a mind free to talk over Jessie's wishes with her papa.

As to Jessie, although Alice was constantly in her thoughts, she kept a strict silence, and tried so hard to be patient and not let her castle in the air make her idle, that Mrs. Marshall was more than ever convinced that her will was strong enough if only it could be rightly directed ; that was the point on which she longed for some sure ground for hope.

Wednesday came, and punctually at half-past two Jessie brought her work into "the snugery" (as the little side room was called), and though her mother was there before her, and her eagerness was so great that she felt as if she could scarcely breathe, she waited till Mrs. Marshall said, "Well, Jessie, are you still in the same mind?"

"Oh, yes, mamma ; oh, may I do it ? may I ?" she said, as she saw a smile on Mrs. Marshall's face.

"I have consulted with papa, Jessie, and I have seen Alice."

"Oh ! but you didn't tell her, surely, mamma ?"

"No, no, dear ; I said nothing about it ; but I

thought I should like some little talk with her, in order to find out if she was such a companion as I should like for my daughter."

"Oh, say yes, mamma, say yes!"

"Yes, Jessie, I could not help thinking how much more she had made of her life of suffering than most girls make of their lives of happiness: from what I saw of Alice's mind in the conversation we had, I feel sure she would do you only good; but there are other things to consider, Jessie."

"Yes, mamma, I know."

"In the first place, if you undertake it, you must go through with it. It would never do after raising her expectations to let any scheme or plan of your own or of others interfere with your hour daily."

"Oh, mamma, I should not wish it."

"No, I quite believe you, Jessie, and that just now you think nothing would be so delightful as teaching Alice; but temptation to neglect it *may* come, and then, Jessie—"

"Then, mamma, I would not give way to it, oh, I am sure I would not!" said Jessie beseechingly.

"And then, Jessie, about the hour in the morning; if you grow lazy and neglect your lessons, I should be obliged to stop this, sorry as I should be to do it, but, as I have often told you, darling, home duties are of the first importance."

"Yes, mamma."

"Well then, dearest, you have papa's consent and mine too, but I would rather you did not decide this minute about so important a subject; think again of it, and of what I have said too, and to-night I will come when you are in bed, and we will settle it."

Jessie threw her arms round her mother's neck and then took up her work, and very hard she found it to do, quietly, still more difficult to refrain from speaking of all the plans in her mind; but she accomplished both, and when three o'clock came, went to her studies and tried to fix her mind on them, but she did not succeed very well.

That night, as she lay in her little white bed and watched through the uncurtained window the silver moon sailing in the deep blue sky, her busy brain was full of wonderful plans for Alice's benefit, and when Mrs. Marshall came in with her gentle step, it was to find her little girl very much excited and in the very highest spirits.

"Oh, mamma, it's quite settled, and you will see how well we shall get on; and then, too, it will be doing some good, you know, mamma, and oh, I am so happy!"

"If I were only sure, Jessie, that it would be for your good—"

"Oh, mamma, what harm can I get?"

"None from Alice, I feel sure; but you know, dearest, how careless you are about many things

when you have one all-absorbing interest, and I don't feel quite happy about you, Jessie."

"Oh, mamma, do you think me so hopeless?" and Jessie laid her head on her mother's shoulder.

"Not hopeless, darling, if only I could be sure that this work is undertaken in reliance upon God's strength; oh, my child!" she said with unwonted energy, "do not rely upon yourself; think how very often you have made resolutions only to break them, and be persuaded to pray for help to keep you steadfast; it is that you want, dearest; you have good impulses and a most loving disposition, but these are not enough to keep you right; only God can do that," and Jessie felt a tear fall over her face.

"Mamma, I know it; I can't fix my attention when I have things to do I don't like, and the least thing upsets me, and then it is so difficult when I have any one plan in my mind, to think of anything else; but really, mamma, I feel sure I shall persevere with Alice, because it will be such fun teaching her; and as to the getting up and doing all my other work,—oh, mamma, do you think in those *little* things I could ask God to help me?"

"Do you remember the words 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much?'"

"Yes, mamma."

"Then, Jessie, be sure of this, our Saviour would not have said them; He would not command faithful-

ness in little things, and, at the same time, withhold the strength to do them ; because we all know (we who are older I mean), that little duties are often far harder to do than great ones, excitement often helps us through those, but only God's grace can sustain and encourage us in smaller trials ; and He giveth liberally and upbraideth not."

"Mamma, will you ask Him for me?"

Mother and daughter knelt together in the moonlight, and when they rose, and Mrs. Marshall bent down to give her a good night kiss, she felt far happier about her child than when she had entered the room. God's blessing had been asked on the undertaking, and His promise is sure, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

CHAPTER III.

LESSONS.

JESSIE faithfully accomplished her hour's work the next morning, and was refreshing herself with a run in the garden before breakfast, when her mother joined her. "One thing we have forgotten, Jessie," she said, with a smile, "and that is, Mrs. Winter's permission ; perhaps she will object to your teaching Alice."

"That I am sure she won't, mamma," said Jessie, in a positive tone ; "but, of course, it would be very rude not to ask. I can go before school this morning ; may I ?"

"Certainly. Oh ! there's the prayer-bell. Come, Jessie."

Soon after nine, Jessie, with a fresh bunch of flowers from her garden, was on her way to the toy-shop ; it was nearer home than school, so she took her books with her, as to be unpunctual on this of all days was the last thing she desired. Mrs. Winter was

dusting the shop, and had scarcely time to say "Good morning," before Jessie began :

"Oh, Mrs. Winter, I've a very great favour to ask you."

"If I can grant it, miss, I shall be very happy."

"Oh, that you can, certainly. It's only to ask—that is, mamma has given me leave to ask—if you would allow me to come here an hour every afternoon, and do some lessons with Alice; I should enjoy it so."

It would have been very hard to say "No," with that bright, eager face looking up straight into her own, even if Mrs. Winter had been so inclined; as it was, she answered directly, "It would give Alice more pleasure than anything else, I do believe, and she's sadly backward, poor child! For all she's sixteen, there's many a child of ten knows more than she does; but then her health has been the drawback; but she is stronger now, and I think could bear it, and thank you very much, miss, I am sure."

"Is she down? May I tell her?"

"Yes, she is in the parlour."

So was Jessie, in less than no time. Alice was sorting her old flowers, cutting the stems of some, and putting the others on one side. "I have brought you some more," she said.

Then, scarcely waiting to be thanked, she unfolded her plan to Alice; so fast, and with so much excite-

ment, that Alice was rather overwhelmed ; going over it a second time, Jessie made it more clear, and Alice was quite as much delighted as she had expected she would be, which is saying a great deal.

"Then we will begin this afternoon. Look ! won't it be fun doing these exercises ?" and she displayed two of her own books.

"I'm afraid you will find me very stupid," said Alice.

"Not a bit of it ! Then I will be here by four. Good bye."

For about an hour or more, school work went on very steadily. Jessie had her music-lesson, and read history, and wrote composition, three things she dearly loved ; then the poetry class was called up, and she was told to write a parsing exercise, and do three sums. Poor Jessie !

The old feeling that this was unjust rose strongly within her, as she took her seat at the deserted desks, and, instead of bending her mind to the task before her, she began to wonder whether Alice liked poetry ;—she hoped so. Then, looking up, she saw through the opposite window the grey church tower, which the deep blue sky showed off so clearly in the morning light, and then she began to wonder how long it was since the tower had been built, for it was very old indeed, and how Beckford had looked then ; and, as this was an old and favourite theme for speculation,

she quite lost herself in it, till she was startled, and suddenly brought back to the present time, with its manners and customs, by Miss Morgan calling out, in a strong, determined voice, "Jessie!"

And, behold, half an hour was gone; the parsing was untouched, and she had only done three figures of her sum!

A habit of inattention is very difficult to conquer, and, although Jessie suddenly remembered her good resolutions, and what depended on keeping them, it seemed almost impossible to apply herself to the figures while the girls were reading "Henry the Eighth," especially as Marian Francis was droning through Wolsey's famous speech to Cromwell, which she could have recited with spirit and power. Twelve o'clock struck, and, really anxious not to fail, Jessie summoned courage to ask Miss Morgan if she might not take her books and slate into the study; she was quite sure that away from the reading she could do better.

But Miss Morgan would not hear of it. She must conquer her inattention, and learn how not to be distracted; and she further added, that if the exercise and sums were not correctly done by half-past twelve, they would be doubled, and have to be done at home.

Jessie burst into tears. Extra lessons had not entered into her mind when making her calculations with regard to Alice, and she knew very well that it

would be impossible to accomplish more in the early hour than what she had set herself, and she felt very doubtful about finding extra time. She dried her tears, and did her best ; but it was of no use, school was over, and the girls buzzing about her like so many bees, and she had not yet worked one sum. Miss Morgan called her, and, after setting her three more sums, and another page of parsing, said she was idle and obstinate. And perhaps it was not to be wondered at that she should think her so ; but it grieved Jessie, for she was not obstinate, she knew.

There was just this possibility, that no one would want her before dinner ; and in this hope she walked home ; but little Lucy met her at the garden-gate, having just given her new doll an airing and put her to bed, and now came with a petition on her own account for a swing, which Jessie could not refuse. She left her books on the hall-table, and went out, and it was well that "baby" was content to be swung in silence, for her sister had at first no heart to talk. She brightened up presently ; there was still some time to spare after dinner ; but this hope was disappointed, for as she entered the dining-room, there was Fred, and his first words were, "I say, Jessie, I am going to row down to Lowford Bridge after dinner ; we shall be back by half-past two. Now, you must come, and try the new boat."

It was hard to give up the spare time, much as she

liked being on the water, and probably Jessie would have declined to go, if all at once she had not remembered her mother's words, "Home duties are of the first importance."

So she said "Yes," as cheerfully as she could, and tried to enjoy the row and Fred's fun, but her heart was not very light. She said nothing about it to her mamma as she worked, and Mrs. Marshall was rather surprised that she had no impossible plans to communicate with regard to her new pupil; she did not know that self-confidence had been somewhat shaken.

Jessie practised carefully; but, as four o'clock struck, her spirits revived, and in five minutes she was in the little room behind the toy-shop, ready for action.

Alice was sitting in a high chair by the table, and on the oilcloth cover was an inkstand, holding a new pen; two new exercise-books and a copy-book were lying by it, together with a slate and pencil. These preparations looked like business, and Jessie was very much surprised and pleased; she did not think she was doing any great thing in helping Alice, but Mrs. Winter did, and rightly thought that if the young lady was willing to give up her time, the least she could do was to meet her kind intentions by providing necessary materials.

It was very funny, really beginning to teach, for, though Jessie had from very early days been accustomed to set copies for her dolls, and write books for



'You mustn't mind my saying so, but don't you think if you joined each part of the letters
it would be better?'—Page 35.

them, and otherwise endeavour to instruct their doll-minds, and even now thought that to be a governess must be of all things charming, she had never really taught any one, and she wondered how to begin.

"You have a copy-book I see," she said, "suppose you write first, we always do so at school."

She had, with some forethought brought a set of copies with her, and now Alice dipped her pen in the ink and the all-important business began.

Jessie's own writing was not particularly good, but as she contemplated the straggling disjointed characters before her when Alice had done a line, she felt she ought to find fault, and this had not entered into her mind at all ; however, out it came.

"You mustn't mind my saying so, but don't you think if you joined each part of the letters it would be better? I am always forgetting to do it myself, but Miss Morgan is very particular—you don't mind my saying so?"

"Oh, no, thank you," said Alice laughing, "I'm sure to make no end of mistakes, and if you don't tell me of them, I shan't get on at all—is that better?" after toiling laboriously through the word "Andalusia."

"Oh, yes, that's a great improvement."

Jessie soon saw that Alice was very particular indeed, and when four lines were finished she said it was enough, and took up the slate and broached the unpleasant subject of arithmetic. However she found

that at present she need not fear, as Alice only knew the four simple rules, so she heard the pence, farthing, and shilling tables, and set her a sum in compound addition. It required a little explaining, and Jessie found herself repeating Miss Morgan's rules with great emphasis, and thought them really quite easy as she tried to make them clear to Alice. The sum was soon finished, and Jessie set two more to be done by the next lesson and then took up her English History. "Where shall we begin?" she asked.

"Oh, at the beginning, don't you think?" said Alice, "I know so very little."

"Well, shall I ask you a few questions first?"

She made them as easy as possible, but soon found that Alice was right, for beyond knowing about Alfred and the cakes, and that Henry the Eighth had six wives, her knowledge was very misty indeed; some ideas she had about the fate of Charles the First, and she knew that either Thomas à Becket or Wolsey had been murdered in Canterbury Cathedral, but she was not at all certain who was the victim; the Wars of the Roses she had never heard of, and the Norman Conquest did not enter into her ideas at all, so that Jessie opened the history and Alice began to read.

She read exceedingly well as regards expression, but she stumbled a good deal over the hard words, which reminded the young teacher of the benefit of dictation exercises, but she wisely kept to the busi-

ness before her, and when the chapter was ended it was time to go ; so she showed Alice the questions at the end, and advised her to write an exercise from them on what she had read, then she marked some lessons for her to learn, beginning at the commencement of each book, and that done she went home.

On the way, her brothers, just let loose from the grammar school, overtook her, and Fred was very anxious to know why she had been visiting the toy-shop. She parried his questions as well as she could, for ridicule was a thing to which she was specially sensitive ; but at tea-time he asked her again, and, with every one looking at her, she felt there was nothing for it but to speak out, so she said—

“Don’t you know that Mrs. Winter has a poor deformed daughter who never gets out ?”

“If she never gets out I’m not likely to know about her : well, is she old or young ?”

“Sixteen ; and as she can’t go out, I’m going to sit with her and lend her books and so on.”

“All right ! I say, Jessie, what sort of cricket-bats does she keep, Mrs. Winter I mean ?”

“They look first-rate ; suppose you go and see for yourself, Fred ; when is the first cricket match ?”

“Saturday week ; we practise this evening ; can you come ?”

There could be no reasonable objection to this, and when tea was over Jessie accompanied her mother and

brothers to the field ; studying was out of the question when they returned, so there was nothing for it but to make up her mind to an extra half-hour in the morning, and with this in view she went to sleep.

It was scarcely light when she woke the next day, but she resisted her inclination to delay, and when she had dressed and knelt down to her prayers the words, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," came to her mind, and, feeling herself sadly lacking, she laid her wants before that loving Father, who is ever ready to help those who seek Him, and then she took up her slate.

The birds were beginning to sing, and the window-seat was comfortable, but she knew it had temptations, as the cows in the field beyond were objects of interest to her far outweighing sums and parsing, so she resolutely turned away, and relying upon the promise that God would help her, she set to work with such a will that both lessons were finished in a wonderfully short time, and she was ready for her usual hour's work. It was all done before eight o'clock, her mind was at rest, but she had learnt a lesson about the consequences of dreaming that she would not easily forget.

That afternoon she found that Alice had done an exercise very fairly, besides finishing her copy and working the sums ; lessons too were correctly known, and so she introduced geography, and when Alice had found on the map as many places as she could con-

veniently carry in her mind at once, "English in all its branches" seemed comfortably launched. On Saturday, at Miss Morgan's, there was always a Bible lesson, but Jessie felt shy of teaching Alice on any religious matter, so she contented herself with asking a few questions on Scripture history, and found her so well informed that on the following Friday, after half-an-hour's writing and reading, she said—

"Alice, we always prepare a Bible lesson for Miss Morgan every week ; we have a class on Saturday, and I thought that if you did not mind, we would prepare it together."

"Oh, I should like it so much."

"The subject for to-morrow is, 'Trust in God,' and we have to find out instances from the Bible and texts ; but do you know, really, I can't think of any one besides Abraham in the Old Testament ?"

"There was Moses."

"Oh, but it doesn't say much about his trust, does it ?"

"Well, he was an instance of his parents' trust, certainly ; it must have been strong faith on his mother's part to trust him in his basket on the river, she must have been sure God would protect him or she would not have done it."

"Oh, I had forgotten that."

"Yes, and then in Egypt when he saw his brethren's bondage, and afterwards in Midian, where he waited

all those years, he must have had strong faith to keep him from desponding ; then about the Israelites, oh ! and afterwards when before Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. Then Joshua too, and the way the Israelites were led over Jordan, I so often think of that and of the Red Sea when we are perplexed and there seems no way out of the difficulties ; sometimes God removes them, but oftener He does not, but He finds a way over them or through them, as He did with the three Jews in the fiery furnace. Oh ! I think the Bible is full of encouragement to trust, and there are so many instances in which faith has been rewarded. Daniel, and David, and Joseph, oh ! and so many others—the woman of Canaan, and Paul and Peter—the Bible is full of help to us in this way.”

“ You know more about these things than I do, Alice.”

Alice was far too humble to take any praise to herself. “ Oh, Miss Jessie,” she said, “ when one is ill and in trouble, what is there to turn to for comfort but the Bible ? And then it is all so true ; often when I feel inclined to despond, I can remember wonderful ways in which God has helped us when we most needed it, as well as all that is told us in the Bible. Then being shut out from active life I think is one reason why I have read the Bible so much, and it throws such a light upon one’s life.”

"Well, some parts of the Bible I like very much, the psalms and prophecies, and Revelations, and some other parts too, but there are many things I can't understand."

"The Bible is not like other books that we can read and find out the sense for ourselves ; God must explain it by His Spirit : there is a text I like so much, 'And they shall all be taught of God.'"

"Has He taught you, Alice ?"

"I trust so, Miss Jessie, it makes me very happy to think how He leads and guides us and sees just what we want. Why nothing could please me more than having an opportunity of learning with the hope of helping mother and Charlotte, and when I couldn't see my way to it at all, He sent you, Miss Jessie. Oh, He is very very loving."

"Oh, Alice, do you really think He sent me to you ? It seems such an honour to be allowed to do anything for God, and one would need to be very good, I think."

"He makes use of the least and lowest of us, Miss Jessie, and it is such a privilege to work for Him ; and then the weaker we are and the less we think of ourselves, the more we can rejoice in the words, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

"Where are those words ?"

"I will find them for you."

Jessie read the verses, and then said, "But surely,

Alice, your life is a very sad one. I mean, it must be dreadfully hard to suffer pain, and never to go out, and to be dependent on others. Oh! I should rebel against such a life, I'm sure."

"It is not easy always, but then, Miss Jessie, there are so many mercies; mother is so kind and so cheerful always, and Charlotte sends home such letters, and then we can make a living out of the shop (at least it seems as if we should), and all the people here seem neighbourly. And though our dear old home is miles and miles away, it is so nice to think about it, and remember all the lovely walks, and the river, and the church; and then, since you came to see me that day when you brought the flowers, I have had you to think about, and there are the blinds to net for Mrs. Marshall, and since you began to teach me I have been very happy. Oh, no, my life is not sad."

Jessie made no remark, but it flashed across her—if this poor deformed girl was so grateful and contented in her struggling life, what ought she to be? Strong and lively, with such good parents, and so many to love her, able to walk where she liked and be independent, never suffering ache or pain, and with no heavier troubles than having to darn her own stockings and get up early in the morning; surely *she* ought to be grateful, and take delight in pleasing God, who had so blessed her; and yet, how little she thought of Him, how little she valued His kindness, compared with Alice.

Our Saviour said to His disciples of old, "Ye are the salt of the earth;" and true it is, indeed, that every one of His children, no matter how despised and poor, has the power to exercise an influence for good over those with whom he comes in contact. As the salt preserves material substances from corruption, so do Christians purify those among whom they live; and, little as she knew it, the girl so suffering, and so shut out from all that is usually deemed agreeable and pleasant, was beginning to influence for her eternal good the bright, thoughtless child who had taken on herself the task of teaching her earthly things. Very good in their way were these, but the wisdom that cometh from above is beyond price, and Alice, in her quiet life, was setting forth the truth of the words, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Meanwhile, Jessie was persevering in her efforts after steadiness, and, difficult as she found it, it became easier as she tried to give her mind to the subject before her, and Miss Morgan began to wonder where the improvement originated. True, the sums and parsing to be done during the poetry class were still irksome in the last degree, but though she occasionally found herself listening to the reading, and now and then lost consciousness of present trials in some delightful day-dream of herself as a governess,

when she would consult her pupils' tastes, and otherwise be the charming teacher that Miss Morgan was not; still, on the whole, she improved; and Mrs. Marshall, watching intently, as only mothers can watch, for signs of progress in the right way, marked more than one encouraging instance; and one day, during the working time, she said to her: "Do you find it very difficult to get everything done, Jessie? I have thought you much steadier lately, my dear."

This praise from mamma was very sweet, and Jessie coloured with delight.

"Oh, do you really think so?" she said. "I am so glad, for I *have* been trying."

"That I am sure you have, dearest; papa and I have both noticed it. And the sums, Jessie, how do they go on?"

"Oh, they are very horrid still; but do you know, mamma, it helps me so much teaching Alice. Not that she has got on so far as I have; but she is so clear about figures, she is never muddle-headed as I am, and I am sure it helps me."

"That I can well believe. Does she like poetry?"

"Yes, very much; that is, some sorts; but she is not so fond of it as I am. Don't you think it wonderful, mamma, that she gets on so fast? she knows ever so much more of geography, and history, and grammar, than I should have thought it possible she could learn in little more than a fortnight."

"She is anxious to improve, that is the principal thing; then she has not very much else to think of, and everything is fresh to her, poor girl! I can fancy what a delight it is to her."

"Oh, won't it be delightful when she can have a little school! Of course, I have not said anything to them; but I know lots of people who have children who will be old enough next year. There is Mrs. White, the butcher's wife; she has three little ones; and Mrs. Simpson and the Franklins and Smiths. I do like to think about it, because there really is no school for little children. Don't you think it is likely they would go?"

"Very likely; but it is best not to mention it at present. There is plenty of time."

"And then the room. There is that long one at the back of the house, that goes behind it and the next, you know. Mrs. Winter keeps packing-cases and things in it, but Alice and I think it would be just right, and needn't interfere with the boxes at all. If there is a rod put up, and a curtain drawn from one side to the door, it will cut off that end nicely, and make a snug, square little room; and though there is no fire-place, I have thought that a stove like Mr. Simpson's could be put in it. That cost two pounds, I know, because I heard Mr. Simpson telling papa the day he got it; and oh! mamma, if you don't mind, I should like to save up my money for that; may I?"

"Certainly you may; but about forms and tables?"

"Oh, Alice and I can't imagine where they are to come from, but she says something is sure to come at the right time; and really, from what she says, I think it is quite likely; she has told me of several times when they have been helped just at the very time when the help was needed."

"But when have you time for all this talk? I am afraid lessons must suffer, if there is so much conversation."

"Oh no, mamma, the day we made plans about the schoolroom was that Thursday her head ached so and she couldn't read much; we don't often talk, except when we prepare the Bible lesson together, and then she tells me how they have been helped, and I like to hear her—it makes the Bible seem so real."

"Indeed, my child, experience of God's love does indeed make us realise it as nothing else can, and it makes me very happy to know you do talk of such things; Alice can teach *you* something, I think, Jessie?"

"Yes, mamma, though she does not think she is teaching, I am sure. One thing troubles me very much, she feels the heat so now the warm weather has come, and that window in the parlour can't be opened without letting in no end of dust; it is very bad for her, especially as she can't get out of doors."

"Well, we must see what can be done, but there is

three striking—now for the music—how is that duet progressing? come, I will play the bass—that's right! Now we'll see who breaks down first."

Mrs. Marshall did, to Jessie's great delight, but a second attempt proved highly successful, and another duet was accomplished to perfection, so that Jessie was left to finish her practising with the encouraging words, "Improvement in one thing ensures it in another, when the will is right, and every temptation to carelessness conquered is so much gained; and so go on, darling, and be sure if you persevere, you will succeed at last."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BATH CHAIR.

THE month of May was exceedingly warm, and one day in particular was so very sultry that no one was surprised by a severe thunderstorm which between four and five o'clock burst over the town. Alice had been suffering much from head-ache, and lessons had rather dragged in consequence ; but the sound of the rain was most refreshing, and when Jessie ventured to open the window, secure for the present from dust, the cool air blew most softly on the poor girl's heated forehead ; she was sitting enjoying it, when Jessie heard her papa's voice in the shop, and looking over the little muslin blind which half covered the glass door, she saw him with her waterproof on his arm, talking to Mrs. Winter. He soon came in, and after telling Jessie to wrap up and he would take her home, he turned to Alice and said in his pleasant hearty manner, " Well, have you a dragon of a governess in Jessie here ? "

"No, indeed, sir," said Alice, smiling, "nothing can be more patient, and I have been extra stupid to-day, I think."

"What's the matter—headache—eh?" as he felt her pulse, "You are sure you are not working too hard?"

"I think not, sir."

"Don't you ever get out?"

"No, sir; I can't walk more than a few steps."

"Have you no chair you could be drawn in?"

"We had one, sir," answered Mrs. Winter, "but she outgrew it, and afterwards we hired one; but I've inquired here and find there is not one to be had."

"She ought to be as much in the fresh air as possible; plenty of fresh air and the best of nourishment are what she needs—how is her appetite?"

"But very poor, sir; I get the best of things for her, but it is not much she fancies."

"Can she sleep at nights?"

"Not very well."

"Well, I will see, Mrs. Winter," and there was something in that assurance which was hopeful and cheering.

The doctor held a large umbrella over Jessie, and holding his arm tightly she reached home warm and dry. On the way she had asked him what he could do for Alice, and he had replied, "Nothing, if she is to be kept frying in that room."

After tea he had to ride into the country to see a

patient, and after debating in his own mind which of two ways he should take, he decided for the one which led past the vicarage back gates, muttering to himself, "It's very unpleasant, but it ought to be done, so here goes!"

The fact was that Mr. Marshall knew that the only person in Beckford who owned a Bath-chair was the clergyman; it had been constantly used for more than three years by his delicate young wife, but now that she was dead it was kept carefully out of sight, for the desolate husband could not bear to give it away, and indeed valued everything belonging to her who was gone with such a tender reverence that Mr. Marshall knew it would cost him a great effort to take out the chair for another's benefit, and yet he felt he ought at least to know of the necessity for so doing, as no one in Beckford was rich enough to provide one for Alice, and the hire of one from Lincoln was more than Mrs. Winter could afford, he knew; so that he determined to make an attempt to induce Mr. Eaton to give the assistance he so well could, and with this view reined in his horse at the vicarage back gate, which stood open, and revealed the clergyman contemplating his reviving plants, all sparkling with raindrops glistening in the evening sun.

"Good evening!" he called out, "this rain has done a power of good."

Mr. Eaton came forward, "Yes, the lettuces are

quite refreshing to look at ; the sultry weather had made them droop terribly."

"Yes, it has been very trying. Talking of heat, that poor girl of Mrs. Winter's suffers very much from it ; I have been seeing her this afternoon, and really I fear it will go badly with her if she cannot get out ; that little poky back room is like an oven. Do you know her ?" he asked.

"Oh, yes ; I have seen her twice, and a very good, patient little thing she seems : but do you really think so badly of her ?"

"I do indeed ; and this is such an inconvenient place to live in, there is no hiring a Bath-chair ; I never knew a town so behind the times as Beckford, and that's the truth."

"But cannot she move about at all ?"

"She walks a little on crutches, but only a very little—well, I must be off—I am bound for Brambleton—old Mr. Carter is laid up again. Good evening."

"Good evening."

The vicar returned to the contemplation of his lettuces and carrots, but they only reminded him of Alice, and Mr. Marshall's words made him very uncomfortable. "I believe he mentioned it on purpose," he said to himself. "Ah, well ! he doesn't know what it is !" and the clergyman sighed ; nevertheless he went in-doors into a little room on the ground floor, where the Bath-chair stood shrouded in its coverings,

while on the wall were hung the side saddle and riding whip which, in their early married days, his wife had used, and in one corner a set of garden tools rested against the mantel-piece. Everything was a painful reminder to the vicar as he glanced around; surely it was not necessary that he should thus do violence to his feelings? nay! was it not wanting in reverence for the dead to let a stranger use the chair in which so many many times that dear form had reclined? "I really don't believe I could bear to see another face in it," he thought to himself, and then he turned into the study and tried to fix his mind upon a commentary on the Gospels he was arranging; but it was of no use—first one text and then another, as he turned over the leaves of the Bible, reminded him of the duty of self-sacrifice, and the privilege of helping the Lord's poor, and then a voice within seemed telling him that it could be no dishonour to the memory of his gentle, patient wife to let another poor sufferer derive what benefit she could from the chair, which was standing there useless. It was a very long struggle, and often the balance was very much in favour of allowing the chair to remain where it was, but soon after breakfast the next morning, Mr. Eaton himself moved it into the hall, and then as he mounted his horse said to the groom standing by, "Kenrick, here is a note for Mr. Marshall, take it down at once, please; there is no answer required." Then with an effort which he

managed to conceal, he added, "I shall dine at Thorpe to-day, and Kenrick, sometime this morning, as soon as you can, take the Bath-chair to Mrs. Winter's—it is in the hall—take it just as it is."

"Mrs. Winter at the toy-shop, sir?"

"Yes," and then he rode off.

When Jessie came home to dinner, Mr. Marshall called her into his study "Here is a note I wish you to read," he said.

Jessie took it and read it eagerly.

"DEAR MARSHALL,

"I have ordered the chair to be sent to Mrs. Winter's this morning; her daughter is welcome to use it as long as you think it necessary—on one condition—that no one alludes to the subject before me; also I must stipulate for *no thanks*.

"Yours faithfully,

"REGINALD EATON."

"Oh, how very kind!" said Jessie, "and it must have cost him a good deal, I am sure. I have heard he cannot bear to see any of Mrs. Eaton's things, and it would be very trying for him to meet Alice in her chair; but oh! I do think it is good of him," and Jessie's delight was somewhat tempered by the thought of Mr. Eaton's sacrifice.

"You would like to superintend its use the first time, I suppose, Jessie?"

"Oh yes, papa ; when may it be—this evening ?"

"If you like ; I will see if Robin at the hospital can draw it, or rather wheel it, for it is made perambulator fashion, I believe."

The hospital was a kind of alms-house for six old men, who each received a pension from an old charity founded centuries ago ; it was a pleasant-looking old fashioned building, divided into six small houses, each having a garden before it, in which the old men worked ; those who were able were glad to be employed on little errands, or light garden work, and Mr. Marshall thought Robin would not object to wheeling Alice, as he was stronger than the others.

Jessie thought a little and then exclaimed, "But who will pay him, papa ? I would gladly, only I want to save my money for something else."

"Oh, I will see to that. That is my affair. Shall I tell him to be at Mrs. Winter's at a quarter to six?"

"If you please, papa ; that will do nicely."

When Jessie arrived at the toy-shop that afternoon she found its inhabitants in a great state of excitement. A Bath-chair had come in the morning, and the man who brought it said his master was out for the day, and Mrs. Winter was anxious to have some advice. "Shall I go up to the vicarage to-night, and thank him, do you think, Miss Jessie, or wait for to-morrow ?" she said.

"Oh, you mustn't thank him at all." And then Jessie explained how it was.

Mrs. Winter and her daughter were much touched, and inclined to be melancholy till Jessie roused them by saying, "Come, Alice, it's getting late, and unless we finish exactly at five, we shan't be ready for Robin when he comes. Oh, I'm so glad you can go out at last!"

Mr. Eaton did things handsomely, and having made up his mind to lend the chair, he let it go so furnished with air-cushions that when Mrs. Winter packed Alice into it, she felt quite sure that anything like jolting was out of the question, so snugly and softly was she settled. "Oh, I do wish you could come, mother," said Alice, when everything was ready.

"So do I, dear; but I shall be happy at home thinking of you." And her look of contentment quite agreed with her words.

"Where shall we go, Alice?"

"Where you like, Miss Jessie."

"Oh, I don't mind."

"Well, then, please, let it be where I can see the church."

"Oh, yes, I know a first-rate walk; and we must go right past the church to reach it. You know, Robin, the fields behind our house, and then up the lane to Lowford Bridge."

"Ay, miss."

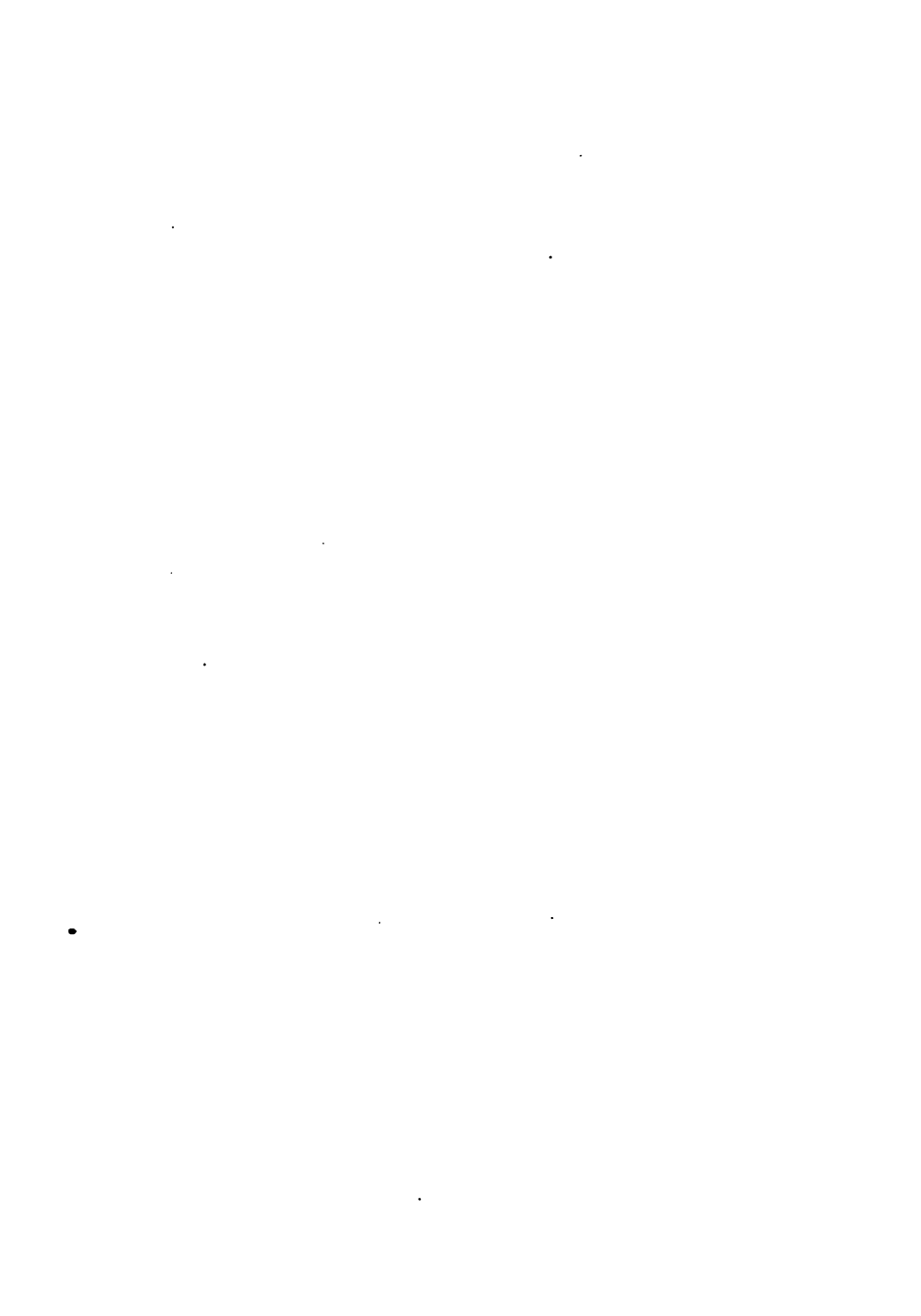
Alice's great desire to see the church arose partly from the fact that the toy-shop was only divided from

the churchyard by a row of houses, so near it that they hid the church from view; and though the bells sometimes sounded rather deafening to her aching head, and she could see the old tower quite close out of her bedroom window, she knew nothing more about it. The church stood just behind the market-place, on the side nearest the hills; a narrow footway led between two houses into the churchyard, and up to the porch; but, as that entrance was guarded with posts, it was necessary to take Alice in her chair from the back of the house round the other side of the church, and by this means she had much the best view of it; and, as she saw it first through its leafy screen of chestnuts in bloom, she was much delighted; so that, as she was wheeled slowly, and ended her survey with a good look at the ivy-covered tower, which was much older than the rest of the building, she said to Jessie that it was much prettier than she had expected to find it. On the other side of the road was the stream, commonly called, in north country fashion, "the beck;" there was a water-mill opposite, and the wheel was turning round, and dashing the water into showers of spray, most cool and beautiful to look at, and refreshing to listen to.

"What does it remind you of?" asked Jessie, archly; and Alice smiled, for that grand secret about John and Charlotte was the mainspring of their daily work, and they enjoyed it exceedingly.



She ended her survey with a good look at the ivy-covered tower, which was much older than the rest of the building.—Page 56.



Robin stayed by the chestnut-trees a little while, to let Alice watch the water-mill, and then they came to the high black palings of the vicarage garden. Great masses of lilac blossom reared themselves sweetly above the dingy woodwork, and laburnums drooped their golden branches over it; the door was open, and the girls saw Kenrick at work among the vegetables, so they asked Robin to go on, fearing that Mr. Eaton might be somewhere near.

They soon left the road, and, turning to the left, entered a field, radiantly green after yesterday's rain; there were plenty of sheep and lambs, a few cows, and a hen, with a brood of little fluffy chickens just escaped from their coop. It was the field where the larks and the thrushes sang, and disturbed Jessie's morning studies; and she was no sooner in it than she called out: "There, Alice, that is our garden, and our house beyond it, just across the beck; oh! and there's mamma, and—no—yes, it is—baby with her. Oh, Robin, come to the bank, do!"

So Alice was wheeled to the side of the stream, and over it came Mrs. Marshall's pleasant voice, asking kindly how she was, and if she found the chair easy?

"Oh, it is delightful, thank you, ma'am; and the fresh air is so pleasant."

"You must mind and not take cold. Jessie, be careful not to be late, because it's some time since Alice was out of doors."

All at once, Fred in his boat shot past ; and this took off little Lucy's attention, so that Jessie received no answers to all her sisterly speeches, and felt rather disappointed that she could not show their little pet to advantage as she thought ; but to Alice's mind the little legs in their white socks, the fair plump face under her limp quilted hat, and the pretty broken accents in which she called her mother's attention to Fred in his boat were charming, and she was eloquent in her praises as they moved on. They had a good view of the backs of houses, red roofs and green gardens ; some with apple-trees showering down their rose-tinted petals, and pear-trees covered with fragrant snow, while here and there clumps of lilacs, with laburnums and pink-thorn, gave a warm colouring to the pretty, home-like picture. How pleasant and fresh it was after the close little room ! and Alice, to whom God's loving care was an ever-present thought, gave Him silent thanks as she lay back in her chair.

When another field had been crossed, they turned into the lane leading to Lowford. It was wide, and very green, though in the middle rather uneven, with two or three different cart-tracks ; so Robin wheeled Alice to the side. This lane was bordered with high hedges, which were quite rarities in that part of the world, where the farmers like to make use of every inch of land, and clip and cut the hedges to the lowest reasonable height ; so that on this account Jessie ad-

vocated the walk, as being very much after her own mind. The hawthorn was losing the first purity of its whiteness, but it was still pretty, and Alice said she could quite imagine how it had looked a fortnight ago. Lowford church was before them, at the distance of half a mile; and this, and another tower in the distance, Robin pointed out, while Jessie reached up to the hedge to gather some May for Alice. They passed two or three cottages standing by the side of the lane, and then the one-arched bridge came in sight; and when they reached it the chair was stopped, and, while the old man leaned over a gate, to talk with a friendly cottager, smoking his evening pipe, Jessie did the honours of her favourite spot, and showed Alice how much wider the beck was here than by the garden at home, and how winding it was, and pointed out the tall, yellow flags among the rushes, and the deep orange-coloured flowers of the marsh-marigold, growing close by the water's edge, and dipping their leaves and buds into the stream. But these were nothing to the forget-me-nots, large and blue, with pinky buds, which clustered among the weeds and nettles. Jessie stood poised uncomfortably on a loose stone, holding fast by the bridge with one hand, while with the other she gathered them, and Alice was very glad when the delicate blossoms were safely in her hand and Jessie was none the worse.

Remembering Mrs. Marshall's caution, the party

turned homewards in reasonable time, and then it was that Alice first saw the Wolds. For some time she was occupied with the flowers in her lap, and watching a milkmaid who came gaily along swinging her pails and singing a lively tune ; but she had passed them and the flowers were arranged to suit her at last, and then she looked up and saw before her the rough rugged hills, looking solemn and peaceful under the quiet evening sky. They were very steep and quite bare, except that each of the few houses had a clump of trees behind it ; the farm-yards with their stacks had a look of plenty even at the distance of three miles, and the church towers stood out square and grey on the hill-side. At the foot of the hills, a dark fir-wood stretched for miles, and its dense blackness showed off the Wolds to perfection. In detail, the picture was one very pleasant to look upon, but taken as a whole the first impression was simply of grandeur and strength, and the thought came into Alice's mind, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." She often saw the Wolds again in all their varied beauty, but her first thought in connection with them was an abiding one, and always full of comfort and peace.

"Well, Alice, are they as good as the Downs?" asked Jessie at last, after watching silently for some minutes the look of interest on the invalid girl's thin face.

"Oh, Miss Jessie, I don't know, they are quite different. The Downs are round, and smooth, and green, and these are rough and bare, but I do think them very beautiful," she said.

They reached the toy-shop as the curfew was ringing, and Mrs. Winter saw a very happy face when she came to help her daughter out of the chair: she was very tired and went straight to bed, and to her mother's great delight slept better than she had done for months.

The walks were continued every evening, and at the end of a week Mr. Marshall went to see his patient. He found her decidedly better, but he told Mrs. Winter that he thought in future it would do her more good if she could go out in the morning. "It is all the same to old Robin," he said, "and he is a capital old fellow to talk to, that is to any one who can understand his brogue, and he is a thoroughly careful, attentive old man, I am sure Alice will find him all that is kind."

Mrs. Winter looked rather blank, so did Alice, but they felt the wisdom of the doctor's advice and tried to speak cheerfully; but it must be owned that the first lonely stroll was rather dreaded, partly because the old man spoke with so broad an accent that Alice could with difficulty understand him, and then she felt sure she should miss Jessie greatly.

As to Jessie, her distress at first was great, but her mamma reminded her that even if the evening walks

had been continued, she could not always have been with Alice ; and this made her conscious of the fact that lately she had rather neglected her brothers, and had made spending the evening with Alice such a point of necessity, that it really rather interfered with those home duties it was so needful for her to attend to ; so she soon saw the sense and wisdom of the arrangement, and that afternoon ministered consolation to Alice as well as she could.

The next morning, at half-past eight, Robin and his charge left the town, and went in the direction of the fir-woods. Alice was very shy at first, but presently she plucked up courage, and asked the reason why Robin had a large old basket slung on his arm ?

"It's to bring back ferns fra the woods, miss ; Mrs. McIntosh, up at yon grammar school, is making a rockwork, and she wants it to be real handsome, so I made so bold as to bring this here basket with me, and belike I shall find enew to fill it ?"

"Does the Osmunda grow in these woods ?"

"The what, miss ? I'm rather dull of hearin'."

"The Royal fern, which flowers—the Osmunda, its name is."

"Nay, I can't say, miss ; I nobbut knows them sorts as grows in yon fir-woods, and as to when they flowers, if they do at all, I can't say whether it's on a Mundah or a Toosdah."

"The rain, two days ago, I should think has made the woods pleasant."

"Ay, 'twas a featish sup to be sure ; how it did sile down ! it teamed off Hospital roof and filled pancheon after pancheon, while Bill Roberts and me was beside whersens to know what to do wi' it ; for ye see, miss, it doan't do to gie it the run of the garden, it makes so much clat on the foot-pads and sich."

Alice gathered the sense out of this labyrinth of unknown terms, and then asked whether he thought Mrs. McIntosh's rock work would be a pretty one ?

"Oh, it frames well ; it 'ill be sightly enew come time—but we must wait while next summer."

They had now come to a field where some oxen were grazing, and seeing Alice look rather timidly towards them, Robin said, "Niver thou fear, miss, them beeast weeant hurt the', doan't the' be scared now."

They went through a field of what Robin called "turmits," then through one of "whoats," and then reached a lane covered with furze and blackberry bushes, which ran parallel with the hills and with the railway too, and Robin said it was "a good place to see the treeans fra."

Once in the wood, under the swaying pine boughs, with the early summer sunshine on their straight trunks, and making flickering shadows among the leaves of the trailing honeysuckle at their roots, Alice lay back in a sort of restful dream, while Robin was stooping in the ditch after his ferns. It was most

quiet and peaceful, now and then the birds would sing in the hedge-row close by, or the men at work in the fields would whistle or call loudly to their horses, while quite near from beyond the hedge, where "the corn was springing fresh and green," a lark carolled sweetly as he soared higher and higher till he looked only a speck in the deep blue sky. Great lumbering humble bees came by with a loud buzz, and the beautiful little lady-birds crept up to Alice's white fingers and tickled them as they rested on the chair, and the soft breeze kept up a gentle murmuring music among the trees overhead ; it was a fitting time to think of Him whose tender mercies are over all His works, and Alice began gently to sing the words which she loved so well.

"Through all the changing scenes of life
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ."

Presently, as Robin still kept in the ditch, she undid the apron of her chair, and drawing out her crutches which her mother always packed with her, she began swinging herself towards him. It was wonderful how much stronger she had grown even in one week, and she moved along so lightly over the carpet of fir-needles that the old man did not hear her, and gave a great start when she said, "How are you getting on, Robin?"

"Why, miss, you've 'most scared me to deead; why, bless you! did you think old Robin had left you to it? I was coming back very soon. Nay! doan't stand there, or I shan't be easy no ways; sit ye down on the moss here, and I'll soon be done."

"Oh, don't hurry; I like to watch you."

Several roots of hard fern, with its long leaves, lay near her mossy seat, with a still greater abundance of lady fern; and after Robin had done tugging at the bank, he laid down triumphantly a magnificent hart's tongue, with long drooping fronds, wet with dipping in the little stream that trickled by the woodside.

"What beauties you have found, Robin: oh! how fine they are! that must be because the ground is so damp."

"Ay, to be sure it is: them ferns is like some sorts of the Lord's people; gie 'em sunshine, and they droops directly, but nobbut put 'em in the shade, and keep 'em moist wi' the water of affliction, and nowt can grow better. Well, the Lord knows best, be it plants or folks, and it 'ud make His work easier, it seems to me, if them as shade is ggod for 'ud take to it kindly; for look at these here ferns, can owt be more pleasant to look upon? but Mrs. McIntosh, she's for covering yon rockwork wi' 'em, sun or shade, and ivery time a sup o' rain comes, she says, 'They are coming on finely now;' and then comes down on me, when the sun beats on 'em, to ask me why they

doan't look cool like the others? But some folks nivver sees the fitness of things; no, nor nivver will, that's my opinion, till two Sundahs comes together; and they worrits every one whilst."

"I shall like to think of what you said about some plants growing best in the shade, Robin; it is very nice to think so."

"Ay, sure; you've your cross, miss, like the rest on us; but nivver you fear, miss; if you're the Lord's own bairn, He'll gie ye what's good for you, and as for owt else, why the next world 'ill make this square. But, come, it's time to be turning home, I'm thinking. Now for the basket. I must plant them ferns to-night, they weean't bear keeping while to-morrow."

CHAPTER V.

PROGRESS.

"WELL, Alice, how did you get on with Robin?" asked Jessie, as she entered Mrs. Winter's parlour that afternoon.

"Oh, very well indeed, Miss Jessie; I think he is charming. He dug up ever so many ferns for M^rs McIntosh's rockwork, and I sat on the moss by the bank and watched him, and he was very talkative."

"So you don't think you shall mind going in the mornings?"

"Oh, no, it was very fresh and nice. Of course, it would be nicer to have you with me," she added, with a grateful look; "but then I did have you all last week, and you could not be with me always."

"No, and papa says you will get well much faster if you are out in the morning air."

"Does he really think I shall get *well*? I know he thinks I shall get stronger; but to be well—oh! I can't imagine what it feels like."

"He was telling mamma last night of a similar case. It was a poor boy. He was ill for a long while and obliged to walk with crutches ; but, after a time, he left them off."

"I was so tired when I came home this morning that mother only let me eat my dinner, and then I fell fast asleep, and only woke a few minutes ago. Wasn't it lazy?"

"Not at all," interposed Mrs. Winter, who had just come in ; "it was the best thing possible, Miss Jessie, and so your papa would say, I am sure ; sleep and sunshine and fresh air are the best of medicines."

Here the shop-bell rang, and the girls began their work. Alice was steadily advancing in all she was learning, and she had a most earnest and patient little teacher. Sums became easier, both to herself and Alice, as she explained them in easy words, which made the difficulties disappear with wonderful rapidity, and the necessity for choosing simple terms in which to make her meaning clear was a great help to Jessie in arranging her thoughts, and the result was that she was quicker over her own arithmetic ; and the actual benefit of this appeared the next morning.

It was the dreaded day, when extra parsing and sums were Jessie's portion ; but when, as usual, she took up her slate and book to receive orders, to her astonishment, Miss Morgan said, "We read Wordsworth this morning ; you can bring your book, and join the others."

Jessie opened her eyes, but, beyond a grateful "Thank you," no remark was made. That Miss Morgan felt her improved was evident, and Jessie would not spoil her satisfaction by exclaiming; and, though the governess would on no account have had her aware of it, the poetry class was quite a different thing when Jessie was there, with her musical voice and expressive rendering of the poet's meaning, very unlike the droning of the other girls, who required so often to be reminded of stops and emphasis that the beauty of the poetry was entirely lost.

Jessie spent a happy hour, and then rushed home into her mother's bedroom. "Oh, mamma," she exclaimed, "what *do* you think?" But there she stopped, for little Lucy, having managed to get a large thorn into her finger while inspecting the gooseberry-bushes, was under treatment for its extraction. But, as soon as this business was over, and Lucy had run off to set free the kitten she had tied up in her doll's perambulator, Jessie began again.

"Oh, mamma, just fancy! something happened at school this morning that has only happened once this half-year. Can't you guess? Now do!"

"Miss Morgan praised you for steadiness, Jessie?"

"No, mamma, not quite that; but it's the same thing. When I took up my slate, expecting three horrid sums, and an extra page of that dreadful parsing, she told me to read poetry instead, and I did; wasn't it fun?"

"I am very glad, indeed, to hear it, dear ; it shows that you have been successful in your efforts. I am more pleased than I can say." And Mrs. Marshall gave her little girl a kiss.

Jessie was so happy that she could not help shedding a few tears ; but little Lucy's voice under the window, asking for "Jettie to tum and play with her," soon dispersed them, and she had a good game in the garden before dinner.

As they were sitting at work in the afternoon, Jessie said to Mrs. Marshall, "Mamma, I'm in a puzzle, and I want you to help me. Which is the best thing to do, to go away from a temptation, or to fight with it?"

"It very much depends on circumstances, Jessie ; but if you can tell me the case in point, perhaps I can help you."

"Well, mamma, you know my room is next the boys', and they make such a racket when they are getting up as you never heard. It's been a great deal worse since Fred slept there ; and now I get up early it is such a bother. They talk and make such a noise that I don't know how to do my lessons, and between them and the boys, I have such a headache, even if I do manage to get through my work ; and this morning there were five mistakes in my French exercise, which I am sure I should not have made if I had been quiet."

"And had you thought of any way of altering this?"

"Yes, mamma. You know the little lumber-room, that's half in the roof. I thought, if you didn't mind, I could take my things there. There are plenty of boxes to write on; besides, there is only a skylight, and that's a good thing."

"Why! does the window interfere with lessons?"

"I try not to let it, but it does. I can't help hearing old Jackson when he is milking the cows; and then his grandchildren play about; and the hen and chickens, and everything else. Oh! it is so difficult, you can't think."

"Yes, I can think quite easily; and I believe the little lumber-room would be nice for you. If there was no other place, it would be right for you to struggle on with your difficulties; but, as it is, there is really no need, and I know it is very hard to study in the midst of a noise. So you can have the little room, Jessie."

"Oh, mamma, thank you so much; I was afraid you would think it was cowardly and silly of me to want my work made easier, and that it would be wrong to try to make it so."

"Temptation is never in itself a good thing, and the very prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation,' shows that it is right to avoid it. Of course, when you cannot help it, that is another thing. But I am sure it will be

right for you to have the lumber-room ; so you may take possession to-morrow, and study with a free mind."

"Thank you, dear mamma ; you always help me."

"My dear child, anything I can do for you, you know how happy I am to do it ; and when I see you really combatting your faults in the right spirit, I cannot tell you how thankful I am, and how glad to assist you."

So it was indeed, for the next morning when Jessie, after mounting the three steep steps, opened the lumber-room door, instead of a chaos of boxes, she saw a little round table under the sky-light, and a chair by it ; the boxes were piled up neatly on one side, the floor had been washed, and on the wall just opposite the chair was the text, painted in blue and gold, "Be not weary in well-doing."

Jessie felt sure it was her mother's work, it was so beautifully done ; but when had she found time to paint it ? she was always so busy. But how pleasant it was to see it there, and to be reminded of that ever watchful love which was so constantly around her ! Jessie felt, as she laid her books on the table, that she would not grieve that loving heart by her faults if she could help it again, and there were the brave encouraging words to strengthen her in her difficulties.

The table was old and worm-eaten, but it did not "jiggit" as the one in her bedroom was accustomed

to do, and that was a great comfort, and to be shut out from noise was of all things agreeable, so she set to work with a will, and had no headache this morning when she ran downstairs.

Her mother was in the breakfast room, and Jessie flew up to her, "Oh! mamma, thank you so much for that beautiful text, I do like it so, and it's so nice just opposite where I sit."

Mrs. Marshall allowed herself to be hugged thoroughly, and did not check her impulsive little daughter's expressions of affection by telling her not to rumple her collar, which really might perhaps have been excusable, for it was beautifully smooth and white, and Jessie's arms were unscrupulous and quite indifferent to the consequences likely to follow their tight grasp of her mother's neck; but what were starch and limp collars to affection and perfect confidence? Mrs. Marshall would have said; so she not only submitted with a good grace, but returned the embrace and said, "How do you know I did it, Jessie?"

"Oh, but I'm sure you did—it is so neat; and besides no one but you and papa knows what text would be the best one for me. Oh, mamma, when did you do it?"

"Oh, by degrees—a little at a time. I began it a fortnight ago, and finished it yesterday. I should have given it to you last night, but when the lumber-

room was decided on, I thought it would be a pleasant surprise, so I put it up in the evening, when you were out walking."

"And the table and chair and everything so clean; oh! it is the most charming little room."

"Jane would wash it, when I asked her to help me to arrange the boxes more comfortably; she said she was not going to have Miss Jessie 'löst i' dust,' so you may thank her too."

"And you won't tell the boys?"

"Oh, no, I should not think of such a thing—monkeys!—where are they? Oh, I do believe Fred is in the boat. Run, Jessie, and tell him it is nearly time for prayers; take baby with you, it is lovely in the garden."

It would be quite impossible to say how much Alice enjoyed her mornings in the open air. Old Robin was very careful of her, and anxious to show her the prettiest walks, and he was so thoroughly acquainted with the neighbourhood of Beckford that he could take her to many a pleasant shady nook which, with a more indifferent guide, she would never have reached. Sometimes he stopped the chair at cottage doors to let her admire fully the brilliant geraniums filling the small diamond-paned windows, and every little ragged child he met seemed to be a humble friend, and if his only greeting was—as it happened generally to be—"Now, bairn, how art the'?"

it was given with a tone of interest that was in itself heart-warming. Mrs. McIntosh's garden was much on his mind, and he confided to Alice that she directed him so many times to do one thing, that he quite believed she did not think him "reeght sharp," and this weighed upon him, though Alice said it was very likely only the lady's way. They passed the grammar school one morning, on their way to a wood in search of fir-cones, which Robin wanted for the purpose of making baskets, and although it was only nine o'clock there was Mrs. McIntosh working in the garden. Seeing Robin with the chair, she came to the gate and asked him to wheel it in.

Alice was exceedingly shy, consciousness of deformity made her shrink from strangers, and this lady in particular had such a loud voice, and talked so fast that Alice would have been as well pleased if she had been allowed to go on in peace. But the tones sounded softer in the open air than in the little toy shop, and Mrs. McIntosh's kind manner soon set her at her ease.

"Robin, I want you to see the plants Mr. McIntosh brought from Lincoln last night; there are some geraniums and calceolarias and a few verbenas; do you think it is too early to set them? it ought not to be, it is the middle of June."

Robin shook his head—"I should let 'em wait while next week, ma'am, the ground was white wi'

frost this morning, and a vast of plants is spoiled by being set too soon—let 'em bide a wee."

"I was afraid you would say so, for I am quite longing to see the beds planted, but I'll take your advice," she said graciously.

"Yon's the rockwork, miss," said Robin, pointing to it, and Mrs. McIntosh told him to take the chair near it, and when he had called attention to all the ferns growing in crevices and drooping over the rough stones and shells, the lady asked him to go and look at the plants, and meanwhile she would take care of Alice.

She was very kind and showed her the best points of view from the garden, then she inquired if she felt stronger, and when Alice said she always walked now a little every morning, she invited her indoors, and took her to the drawing-room, where was a footstool she wished to match, and she asked Alice if she thought her mother had anything like it or that would contrast with it?

Alice thought she had, and the lady, after saying she would call about it, drew her attention to a case of rare ferns in the window. They were very beautiful, and Alice admired them greatly. "Mrs. Marshall has some finer than these," said Mrs. McIntosh.

What a pretty room it was! Everything in such exquisite taste; flowers, pictures, and books. Alice had never been in such a place before, and she was very much pleased.

"Do you like books?"

"Yes, ma'am, I'm very fond of reading."

"Do you care for hymns?"

"Oh, yes; I love them dearly."

"Well, I will lend you this if you like," taking up a handsomely bound volume lying on the table; "there are a few new ones with many old ones, and no doubt you will find some favourites."

Alice thanked her, and then Robin appeared at one of the windows, wondering much to see the empty chair.

Mrs. McIntosh stepped through the open French window into the garden, and Alice followed.

"Well, Robin, what do you think of my plants?"

"The geraniums are rare handsome plants, and so are the small ones; but they calcelaries I doan't think much to."

"Ah, well, we must see what can be done with them," and Mrs. McIntosh, who was helping Alice into her chair, did not look at all displeased at the old man's plainness of speech.

After leaving the grammar school they crossed the beck, which wound about so much that few places could be reached without going near it, and then they turned into the fields bordered by a wood, where wild roses were blooming in luxuriance near the path. When the end of their stroll was reached Robin went after his fir-cones, and Alice, taking her crutches,

moved contentedly about; presently, down by the ditch sides, she found some of the green leathery lichen and the grey cups she had noticed in Mrs. McIntosh's fern-glass, and sitting down on the bank, she began to gather it carefully, for she remembered the speech about Mrs. Marshall's ferns, and she thought perhaps an offering of this lovely lichen might be acceptable. Presently, poking with her crutch among the undergrowth of brambles, she discovered some beautiful feathery moss, which she added to her store, and then, feeling rather tired, she got into the chair again and took out her book. It was very quiet and pleasant in the wood; looking upwards she could, through the dark pine branches, catch here and there a glimpse of deep-blue sky, and the wood-pigeons sang sweetly overhead. She was lying back on her pillows enjoying the sweet peace of the time before looking at the hymns, when all at once she heard a footstep, and, looking straight before her, she saw the vicar.

Never before had she met him, and a brilliant colour flushed her cheeks as he came up, for she could not but remember whose chair she was in, and she feared it might be painful to him to see her. And, truly, Mr. Eaton, would rather have walked ten miles in another direction than have had the encounter; but, after a moment's hesitation, he came forward, saying kindly—



'Presently, poking with her crutch among the undergrowth of brambles, she discovered some beautiful feathery moss.'—Page 78.

"Yes, sir ; and grammar, and biography, and arithmetic ; and yesterday she brought a little book about science, there are snow crystals in it, and so many things I wanted to know. Oh ! I can't tell you what pleasure she gives me."

"Ah ! your life must be very trying ; it is sad for one so young to be so unable to do as others, but it is comforting to think of the words 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'"

"Yes, sir ; indeed, it is."

"And 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,' that is another favourite text of mine."

"Yes, sir ; oh, indeed, I think it helps me more than anything, it would be so very hard to bear if we were not sure it is sent in love, and that 'all things work together for good to them that love God,' that comforts me very much."

"Yes ; and God lets many things help us, by the way. I mean, supposing life looks like a gloomy fir-wood, there are flowers and mosses by the path through it."

"Yes ; and always the blue sky above."

"I suppose you are not able to exert yourself much ?"

"I can do much more than I did, but now Miss Jessie and I have a plan. Mr. Marshall thinks I shall be pretty strong by next year, and then I want to carry it out ; I should like to ask you about it, sir, if I may ?"

Mr. Eaton gave willing consent. He had been so wrapped up in his own sorrow for his great loss that lately no one had brought any grief or perplexity to him, and while he regretted it and felt it was his own fault, it was inexpressibly comforting to him to see Alice's dark eyes looking up to him as if sure of sympathy. He listened attentively while she detailed her scheme (leaving out only that part which related to her sister), and when she finished by asking "Do you really think it might succeed?" he answered kindly, "I feel sure it would; Beckford has no school for little children, and I am sure it needs one; where would you have the school-room?"

Alice explained.

"Capital! well, Alice, I will say all I can for you."

"Thank you, sir; but please don't mention it at present; everything is so uncertain, and if I should be ill again, it would be no use."

"Oh, but I think you will get strong in time; you look already much better than when I first saw you."

"I am, sir, as strong again; it's all the fresh air," she added, feeling that if she might not thank her new friend, she would at least let him know that she felt the benefit of his kindness, and though he said nothing in reply, he did not look displeased.

When Robin came up a few minutes later, he was much astonished to see the clergyman sitting by Alice

talking away, and he set down his basket of fir-cones, before speaking, he was so taken by surprise.

"Well, Robin, at your basket-work again?"

"Ay! sir, yon bairns of Dick's takes a sight of doin' for, and an honest penny nivver cooms amiss."

"Let me see, Robin, how many grandchildren have you? Thirteen?"

"Nay, sir, coom! there's nobbut eleven on 'em, lads and lasses."

"Who buys your baskets?"

"Oh, the quality, mostly, but some of the shops takes 'em too, and onnybody as sees 'em in the streets; I sold a vast on 'em last year."

When the chair moved homewards, Mr. Eaton walked by its side for some little time talking to the old man; he left it before they reached the town, and when he bade Alice good morning, she felt she had found another friend.

That evening Jessie was tying up her white pinks, which just then were filling the garden with their delicious fragrance, when a sound, as of the tap of crutches made her turn her head, and there behind her was Alice; she could at first scarcely believe her eyes. "How ever did you come?" she asked, when she found her voice.

"Oh, I walked down;" and though she spoke lightly, Jessie knew it must have cost her something

to cross the market-place, and come past all the shops in High Street, and she honoured her accordingly.

"Look, Miss Jessie, I brought home the window-blinds," and she opened her hand and displayed some silver, "won't it be a nice nest-egg?"

"Oh, yes, then you think you can save it?"

"Yes, mother says the shop seems likely to answer, and if it does, all I earn myself we can put by, and call it 'The School fund.' I haven't settled what to get with this, I thought of the stove, but I think it would be better to put it by and wait; Mrs. McIntosh has been since tea and given me an order too."

"Oh, that's nice, what is it?"

"A footstool; mother has no patterns that will do to go with one she has in her drawing-room, so I am to have it to copy."

"That's capital! but come, let me show you the garden."

"Is this yours?"

"Yes; are not the pinks sweet? and look, the roses are in bud."

"How nice the sweet briar is! and what a beautiful lupin!"

"Yes, but come and look at the carnations."

The garden was an old-fashioned one, there was no distinction between flower and kitchen-gardens, and the carrots waved their feathery plumes amid purple stocks and stately white lilies, while great trailing

vegetable marrows spread their leaves near a bed of musk, and half hid from sight some blue larkspur just coming into bloom.

"I like that fuchsia hedge."

"Yes, in a few days it will be very pretty ; and there are the strawberries beyond ; but they are only in flower now."

"Is that the summer-house ?"

"Yes ; come and look at it."

It was a wooden arbour, tarred outside ; its inner walls were covered with pictures of all sorts and subjects ; it was rather close and hot, and the two girls soon left it and sat on the steps leading down to the beck.

"There, Alice, don't the fields look pretty ?" said Jessie.

"Yes ; how well I remember that first time in the chair, Miss Jessie !"

"So do I ; but how much stronger you are now ! the idea of your walking down here ! Oh ! would you like to see the puppies ?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, come along."

Here Mrs. Marshall came out of the house. "Jessie," she said, "you must not tire Alice ; why don't you sit down instead of dragging her about ?"

"Oh, mamma, I'm only going to show her the puppies : but there's a chair under that tree, sit down, Alice, I'll be back in a minute."

Very grave and solemn looked the two little dogs, as Jessie held them in her arms, so long were their mouths, and so much did they tremble, that Alice thought she had never seen such funny little creatures, and laughed heartily.

"Oh, they are great beauties, I assure you," said Jessie, "though I must confess I don't see it myself yet, but they will improve, I dare say. Oh! must you be going?" as Alice took up her crutches.

"Yes, I think so, I told mother I would not be long."

"Well, come and look at the chickens first, that won't take you out of the way, oh! and there are Fred's rabbits and the jackdaw: but you must come another day, and see everything: good night."

"Good night, Miss Jessie," and Alice turned homewards. It had been a great effort to her to walk through the town, and one or two rude boys had called her Hunchback, but she was glad she had made a beginning, and when she entered the little shop her eyes were so bright, and her whole appearance so different from what it had been a few weeks ago, that Mrs. Winter said: "Alice, I do believe you are growing fat."

"I am growing taller, that I really do think, mother."

"I shall see you a strong girl before long, please God," said the anxious mother; and truly, there seemed every prospect that so it would be.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE SANDS.

IT was drawing near the end of the school term ; the summer holidays would begin in less than a fortnight, and the girls at Miss Morgan's were expecting daily to be told that the time had been fixed for their annual trip to the sea-side. This was occasionally talked of some days before the announcement was made to them, for Miss Morgan held a theory that it was foolish to give them time to look forward to the pic-nic, and thus unsettle them for lessons ; but it may be questioned whether the uncertainty did not unsettle them quite as much. Jessie had been so much steadier lately that the girls complained they could never secure her for a few minutes' chat, but one morning, when school work was over, and she was putting on her hat to go home, Jane Powell said to her, her eyes sparkling with excitement, "Jessie, I believe we are going to Saltby the day after to-morrow."

"Oh, then, Miss Morgan has settled it?"

"I believe so; I heard Fraulein say something to Miss Stansfield about missing Thursday's lessons, that's all; but I'm sure it's time we went, as we go home on Saturday week."

"Yes; it is really getting late. I hope it will be fine."

"What shall you wear, Jessie?" this matter of dress being on all occasions of paramount importance to school-girls generally.

"I don't think I am going."

"Not going? nonsense, Jessie: why not?"

"I have something else to do."

"Oh, but you *must* go; you always have been; don't you want to go?"

"I might, perhaps, if things were different; as it is, I prefer to stay behind."

"What things? oh, Jessie, how tiresome!"

"What's the matter?" asked Miss Stansfield.

"Why, Jessie says she does not think she is going to Saltby this time, and it won't be half the fun without her."

"But, Jane, has Miss Morgan spoken to you yet?"

"No; but then I can guess; besides, if we are going at all, I am sure it's time."

"Well, don't settle things rashly; Miss Morgan will be sure to speak in good time. Jessie, will you ask your mamma the address of that parlour-maid she was speaking about a few evenings ago?"

"Yes ; will it do if I bring it to-morrow ?"

"Quite well ; good-bye, Jessie ; now, Jane, come out under the trees, the house is insufferably warm."

"Mamma," said Jessie that afternoon, "when Miss Morgan asks for me to go to Saltby with them this week, will you decline ?"

"But why, my dear ?"

"Because it is the very first time anything has come in the way of Alice's lessons, and I should not like to shirk them for the first pleasure that would interfere with them. You know, although I have gone to her every afternoon all these weeks, there has not been one interruption ; I have been out to tea three times, but then each time I did not go till six, and nothing else has happened ; so that I really should not like to leave her for the first thing that comes."

"I quite understand you, Jessie, and although I should be very sorry for you to miss your day at the sea-side, I think you are right ; it was what we agreed on when you began, was it not ?"

"Yes, mamma ; so that you will make it right with Miss Morgan."

Mrs. Marshall promised to do her best, and Jessie felt easier in her mind. This day at the sea-side was a good deal for her to give up, but she knew how easily trifles had power to turn her aside from her duty, and she was on this account the more anxious not to neglect Alice ; and, confident in her mamma's

powers of making matters smooth with her governess, she dismissed the subject from her mind as well as she could. She went out walking with her brothers in the evening, and while she was gone, Miss Morgan, in all her dignity, knocked at Mr. Marshall's door and was shown into the drawing-room.

"I don't, as a rule, take notice of what children say, Mrs. Marshall," she began, "but Miss Stansfield tells me that it is spoken of in the school that Jessie does not intend to accompany us to Saltby this time; can it be true?"

"It is quite true that she has a reason for wishing to be excused," and Mrs. Marshall explained the state of the case.

"But do you really mean to say that Jessie has had sufficient perseverance to go on teaching that poor, deformed girl all these weeks without interruption?"

"I do, indeed; and what is more, I find it has steadied her in other ways," and Mrs. Marshall mentioned the early rising among other things.

"She has been doubly attentive at school lately; I could not account for it; but I am really very glad to know this."

"Yes; I always felt if Jessie would only give her mind to anything she undertook she would succeed in it, and my great comfort is in the little home-duties which she is most careful not to neglect."

"But, seriously, I cannot entertain the thought of taking the girls without her. Surely this once it could not matter, and I am sure Miss Winter would see the reason of it."

"I think we had better not press it. It was an understood thing when she undertook Alice that no scheme for pleasure should interfere with her self-imposed duty, and I cannot feel it would be right for her to go back from it."

"Of course if it is made a matter of principle it would not be right to urge her going; but I am very sorry."

The two ladies talked on for some time, then Miss Morgan left, and on Jessie's return, her mother told her she did not think anything further would be said about it. The next morning at school it was spoken of as a settled thing that the expedition was to be on the following day, and though Jessie had one or two pangs of disappointment, she was, on the whole, quite happy to give up the pleasure for the sake of Alice.

That night as she was going to bed, her mother said to her, "Jessie, Miss Morgan has been here again this evening, and I hope you will believe we know best when I say I think it would be right for you to go to-morrow."

"But, mamma," replied Jessie, much distressed, "what will Alice think? I am sure we cannot wonder if she thinks I only care to teach her when there is no

pleasure to hinder me, if I go to Saltby, the very first time there has been the least inducement to leave her lessons for my own amusement ! Oh ! mamma, must I go ? do you wish it ?”

“Yes, my darling ; I do wish it very much.”

Jessie had a little struggle with herself before she could speak ; then she said, “What shall I do about Alice ?”

“I will go to see Mrs. Winter myself, and I will tell her whose doing it is, so don't be unhappy, darling ; I will call you in good time ; and make up your mind to enjoy it, dear child ; good night.”

In spite of Mrs. Marshall's assurances Jessie felt only half sure that she was doing right ; but the implicit confidence in her mother's wisdom and kindness, which had never yet been shaken, came to her aid, and when she sat down to a very early breakfast the next morning, she looked fairly happy, though not so bright as usual.

Mrs. Marshall was reminding her of her cloak and that she must wrap up well during the drive home, when a waggonette, which was one of the carriages ordered to take the party, drove up, and Jessie went to the window. “There's someone in it, mamma, who can it be ?” she said.

“Look and see.”

“Why it is actually Alice ! now, mamma, whose doing is that ? yours, I am sure.”

"No ; it was Miss Morgan's ; but, come, I have no time to tell you about it, Alice will explain it all ; now shall you be happy, do you think ?"

"Oh, yes, yes ; oh ! it is charming — altogether delightful ! it could not be better ; and what a lovely morning it is !" as if suddenly aware of the fact.

Mrs. Marshall had by this time unfastened the street-door, and came out to speak to Alice, who looked very bright indeed, and she watched the carriage drive away with a light heart.

As to Jessie, she was in a great state of wonder and amazement at Miss Morgan's kindness. "Do you mean to say Miss Morgan asked you herself ?"

"Yes ; she came last evening and told us why you had refused."

"Oh, she shouldn't have done that ; I shouldn't mind it at all."

"So she said. But she said, too, she was glad to have the opportunity of pleasing us both, and she thought it would do me good. Mother likes her very much."

"Does she ? Well, to tell the truth, I don't ; but that's nothing."

"I am rather afraid of the young ladies."

"Oh, you needn't be ; there are only fourteen of them, and they are all very kind, and so are the two teachers. Oh, Alice, isn't it fun ?"

An exceedingly lively party of nine got into the

waggonette at Miss Morgan's ; and, as ballast to this excitable freight, that stately lady seated herself amongst them. Probably thinking that it required two teachers to be equal to herself in this respect, she requested Fraulein and Miss Stansfield to take charge of the remaining five young ladies in a smaller carriage, on the box of which one of the housemaids was seated, while cook occupied a similar elevated position by the side of the driver of the waggonette. Hampers and baskets were then stowed in, and the carriages, each with a pair of horses, set off in style. The church clock struck six as they left the town, and they were soon driving at a rapid rate through the open country. At first, Alice was nearly overwhelmed with the united noise of the school-girls' tongues ; but it subsided a little after a while, and Jessie, who sat by her, was continually addressing some little remark to her, for she was very anxious that she should not feel neglected. Arrived at the first steep hill, all the occupants of the carriages, except Alice, turned out and walked,—a kindness, no doubt, which the horses appreciated, for it was very hard work going up. The early morning breeze was delicious, the larks were singing in the deep blue sky, and soft curling smoke was rising from the cottages they passed. Sweet whiffs of perfume from the new mown hay-fields came floating by with every breath of wind, and the haymakers in their shirt-sleeves, with their forks and rakes, made a pretty

rustic picture. As the carriage went slowly up the hill, a wide panorama unfolded itself before Alice's eyes ; no less than three counties (at least, great part of them) lay spread at her feet. There was very little water to relieve the monotony of field and wood, but here and there a golden gleam was visible, and far to the left Lincoln cathedral stood out against the sky, and at a greater distance still, the tower of Boston church raised its noble head, erect and proud, just where a long grey line of sea formed the framework of the picture on that side. Alice had summoned courage to inquire of the coachman about the cathedral, and now again begged to be told the name of the church, so much taller than everything else she saw.

"That's Boston stump, miss."

"Why, what do they call it a stump for?"

"Why, miss, that's more'n I can say ; but it's what they do call it, for all that."

Alice, left to herself, came to the conclusion that this very ugly name had been given to it, because it ended abruptly, without a spire. And she was probably right. People, better acquainted than Alice with St. Botolph's beautiful tower, had come to the same conclusion before her. It was fortunate for her that the day was so clear, or she could not have seen it. They were now nearing the summit of the hill, which grew steeper and steeper ; past little streams of

water trickling by the roadside, two or three of which lower down joined and formed the beck ; past large sheep grazing on the green hillsides, past comfortable farm-houses, with pleasant, bustling sounds of rural life and business, higher up still, and then level ground was reached, and they were at the top of the Wolds. Then the horses stopped, the walking-party reseated themselves, and the chattering began again, Miss Morgan joining in occasionally, and sometimes Alice as well, and every one seeming as happy as possible. Half-way to Saltby, they changed horses, and soon afterwards there was a marked alteration in the face of the country, and Miss Morgan told Alice that the level land they were now crossing was called the salt-marsh. The roads here were very straight and dusty; there were no hedges, and the boundaries of the fields were broad, deep ditches. There was one on each side of the road ; and, at a little distance, there looked to be nothing between the great, fierce-looking cattle, grazing, and the road itself. Farther on were mustard fields, waving yellow in the breeze ; and, still beyond, were acres of flax in flower, the slender stalks, with their pale grey-blue blossoms, wearing a silvery, sea-like tint, as they bent with an easy, graceful motion, quite in keeping with the summer stillness all around. Presently, at some distance from each other, short squat church-towers, with very long bodies, were visible, each with its cluster of houses and trees.

Then more houses appeared, and a long, high sand-bank, while an unmistakable salt smell made it very plain to the excursionists that the sea was before them, though, on account of the high sand-hills, it was quite out of sight. Then the carriages stopped at a red-brick house of humble construction, which was dignified by the name of the Saltby hotel, and all the travellers alighted, Alice, with her crutches, coming last, and finding in Jessie and one of her friends very kind helpers. She was safely landed at last, and then she heard Miss Morgan inquiring for the Bath chair, which she knew the hotel possessed. It was in existence, she found out, though just at present not forthcoming; but, on Alice assuring her that she could walk quite well, the word of command was given, and the party set off, Jessie and Jane Powell keeping by Alice's side. In a few minutes, they had passed through the opening in the sand-hills (all the other girls were scrambling over them), and then a shady nook was found under the bank, and Alice was glad to rest and look around her.

The Lincolnshire coast is nowhere really pretty; in some places it is as desolate and dreary as the seashore can possibly be; a long straight reach of sand, with nothing to relieve it, is monotonous in the extreme, and the want of beauty in the immediate inland scenery is painfully perceptible. But there is one redeeming point, the sands are wide and smooth,



'A shady nook was found under the bank, and Alice was glad to rest and look around her.'—Page 96



and hard as marble, and the great wide sea in its vastness and freshness and strength is always glorious, so that even Alice, whose most vivid remembrance of the sea was of a lovely bay, whose blue waters smiled with a thousand dimples at the foot of steep furze-covered crags, could appreciate the solemn grandeur of the wide expanse of waters before her, and though she missed the blue tint of the waters of her own dear Channel, and found the German Ocean very gray by comparison, yet the tide was coming in in the distance, as gaily as she had ever seen it, and each foam-crested billow was like an old friend to her. She found it very pleasant to rest, and hear in the distance the merry laughter of the girls, as they ran down as far as they could to the water's edge, and at present that was a good way, as the tide was only just turning. She had not had time to feel lonely, before two of the girls came to her, and kindly asking her if she felt very tired, sat down by her side and began to chat so pleasantly and easily, that all her shyness vanished; she forgot what a poor deformed object she was, forgot her inability to run about and shout as the others did, and only realised that she, too, was young, and that her loving heavenly Father had given even to her "all things richly to enjoy."

It was a great amusement for some time to watch the various groups as they moved about, and Alice

found herself asking questions and getting answers to them very comfortably indeed.

"Who is that pretty little girl with the long wavy hair?"

"Oh, that's Sophy Fenton; she's the funniest little thing, the most untidy little monkey, and yet she is so bewitching. I know Miss Stansfield finds it hard work to scold her, but she is obliged sometimes."

"Yes," said the other, "you remember the umbrella?"

"What was that?" asked Alice.

"Well," said the last speaker, "you can see what a mass of beautiful wavy hair she has. It looks very pretty, but it is not so easy to keep in order, and to Sophy, whose great delight when she is dressing in the morning is to hinder the other girls, it is an immense nuisance. Miss Stansfield had spoken about it a good many times, and it still looked as tangled as ever; so one day when we were out walking, Sophy was last, as usual (that is because she is the smallest, you know), she was walking with Emily Francis, and they were chattering away like anything, when suddenly it struck Miss Stansfield, who was just behind with Fraulein, that her hair looked more of a mat than ever; so what did she do but hook the ivory handle of her umbrella in it, and Sophy actually walked home with the umbrella without knowing it, and she only found it out when she got home, and one of the girls made her look

in the glass. It was the funniest thing to see her take out the umbrella, and give it to Miss Stansfield, they both looked so absurdly grave ; but it was of no use, Miss Stansfield soon burst out laughing, and so we all did ; but when we were steady again, she spoke very seriously to Sophy about her untidiness, and since then she has been a great deal better. She was very much frightened, too, for just fancy if Miss Morgan had seen her !”

“Yes, just fancy !” echoed the other.

“Which is the lady you call Fraulein ?”

“Oh, that little dark one there ; she is with Jessie now, don’t you see her ?”

“Yes ; but she is a teacher, isn’t she ?”

“Oh, yes, she teaches German and French.”

“Then how is it you call her by her christian name ?”

“Oh, Fraulein isn’t her name, it’s the German for Miss. Fraulein Schröder she really is, but in Germany Fraulein answers every purpose, so Fraulein she is and will be till she is married, and then she will be Frau.”

Alice laughed.

“Look !” said the young lady on her left hand, “there is the one bathing machine. I wonder, Kate, if old Mrs. Hannath is here still ?” Then turning to Alice, “She is the very worst person to take any one out bathing, for she is always hoping ‘nothing will

happen,' and hinting darkly about 'they little clays.'"

"What does she mean by 'they little clays'?"

"Oh, there are little creeks in the sand and soft places, not quite like quicksands, but still one could sink in unpleasantly deep, but any one who knows the coast can guard against them; but it is her way to maunder about things, poor old body."

"How fast the tide is coming in!" said Alice.

"Yes, it is charming."

"If you like to go down, I can walk quite well," said Alice.

"Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes, thank you."

So Alice hopped along with her crutches, and very soon was standing close to the water's edge, watching the waves come tumbling in one after the other, and laughing at Jessie and her friends, who with stockings off were dabbling in the waves to their hearts' content. Then there was a call to luncheon, and afterwards the Bath chair made its appearance, and while some of the girls bathed, and others gathered sea-weed and shells, Miss Stansfield and Marian Francis and another young lady wheeled Alice along by the side of the water, till they had found her the nicest place to rest in, and then Fraulein came and Jessie and the little heroine of the umbrella, so that Alice had plenty of variety, and so far from having a headache, or long-

ing to be quiet, the fun and excitement were most exhilarating, and she laughed with the rest, and was quite at her ease.

There were a great many shells glistening on the sands when the tide began to go out again, and she left her chair and walked about a little. She had had many shells, and more sea-weed than she could carry home, presented to her by Sophy and her faithful friend Emily, but there is a great pleasure in independence (though Alice knew very little of it), and she thought it would be extremely nice to gather some of these treasures her own self, so as she was left alone for a few minutes, she began the attempt. It was difficult at first, but soon she grew more accustomed to it, and little pink shells and "blackamoor's teeth," and one or two tiny white whelk shells found their way into her pocket, all with the delighted thought, "How pleased mother will be when she knows I have gathered these myself!" She was still stooping, when suddenly she heard herself called, and turning round, she saw Miss Morgan advancing towards her.

CHAPTER VII.

TEARS.

MISS MORGAN'S life had been a hard one. She had a most sensitive affectionate disposition, which was one great reason why she was now so hard and stern, for if once a loving heart rouses itself to subdue its tendencies and calls in the force of a strong will to its aid, the sternness that follows is in proportion to the depth of feeling which has been stirred up to rebel against its sorrows. Until she was fifteen, she and her one brother had been the objects of her parents' most tender care ; but then, just when childhood was passing, and life was unfolding its maze of mysteries to the wondering, earnest soul of the young girl, both her parents died rather suddenly and there was found to be no provision for the children. Mr. Morgan had no near relations, and those of his wife were so angry that he had not insured his life, that they showed but little interest in the children, though two or three united and agreed to pay for two years the expenses

of the boy's education—he was then twelve—and they also sought and found, with some difficulty, a situation for the girl as governess in a gentleman's family, but that was all. Miss Morgan was then only fifteen, but besides being clever she was very tall and womanly-looking, and might have been taken for eighteen or nineteen at the least. The family with whom she was placed were kind to her, and as far as it was possible to be so, she was comfortable ; but words cannot express how she felt the change from her home life or even her life at school, where she had been cared for and watched over as something precious, to this dwelling in a stranger's house. Actual unkindness she did not meet with, but the want of interest smote her keenly ; the elder sisters of her pupils were always having amusements planned for them, and though the governess cared little for these, the total want of perception that she too had a heart and might have appreciated a little thoughtful attention struck her painfully. She felt alone, no one cared about her, she was an object of special interest to no one ; the children she taught looked upon her only as the mainspring of the teaching machinery, and all the warm, sensitive feelings of her heart were thrown inwards or expended themselves in intenser and more devoted affection upon her brother. Thoughts of a loving Father in heaven came to her at times, and she passed among those with whom she lived as religious and very strict, but

her religion brought her little comfort. As the years went on, she grew quite stern and hard ; her sorrowful life without any human sympathy made her look coldly on others whose lot was bright and cheerful, and the pride of a feeling nature rose up against the relations who visited on her and her brother their father's neglect. She toiled hard and saved money, she went without all that she possibly could spare, and bore many little trials and inconveniences consequent on this economy, without a murmur, for her brother was her one sole object, and she determined when the two years had expired to furnish the means for the completion of his school education. He was quite sensible of what she did for him, and united his efforts with hers, so that when his school-life was over, he had gained a scholarship at Cambridge, which with a little help from his sister, would keep him there. So the two worked on, and life began to look brighter to the sister in her quiet school-room as the future showed itself more encouragingly before her. Then a shadow came, symptoms of decline appeared, and for months her brother was in a most delicate state, and at last he died. Then once more Miss Morgan had to take up her burden; but the sorrow which might have softened her if she had but recognised the hand that sent it only did her harm : she encouraged hard thoughts of God as well as man, and grew exceedingly bitter Where she expected sympathy and affection she was

disappointed, and many a little flower of peace and hope blooming by her path she passed by unheeded. Now and then gleams of brightness came through the cloud, and kindness would be shown to her, which she, in her starved longing for it, valued at more than it was worth, and when she found out that it was but the customary gilding of polite indifference her heart would shrink up again. Sometimes she grew much attached to her pupils, but she was not the everything in their minds which they were to her, and as they passed out of her hands she saw or heard very little further of them. She was not a favourite with young people, principally because having forced herself into overcoming faults and weaknesses, she had not the slightest sympathy with others less in earnest, and she forgot at times that if her life had been less sad, she might have been just as thoughtless as others were. To her, in its stern unpitying reality, life was a very different thing from what it seemed to them, and she would not enter into the feelings which had been denied to her. So the time passed on till her youth, and any hopes natural to it which she might have occasionally indulged, passed away, and at thirty-five she was growing gray, when quite by accident, as it seemed, she met at a sea-side boarding house where she was spending her holiday a lady of whom she had heard very much in her childhood, and she knew she was one whom her dear father and mother had greatly befriended.

This lady was a most fascinating person, and as soon as she discovered who Miss Morgan was, she was profuse in her expressions of delight, and would not be content until she had carried her back with her to her home in the neighbourhood of Beckford, there to spend the remainder of the vacation. Nothing could exceed her kindness, and poor Miss Morgan's heart thawed under its influence, and she showed herself, as she really was, bright and affectionate. Then a scheme was broached. There was no school in Beckford, it needed one greatly, why should not Miss Morgan undertake one? Mrs. Hare had a house to spare, which she should have rent free till she could afford to pay for it, and she told Miss Morgan over and over again that she could never repay to her what she and her sisters had received from Mr. and Mrs. Morgan when in their youth they were friendless and poor. Then, too, she was a rich, childless widow; how better could she dispose of her wealth than by repaying this old debt? Miss Morgan hesitated long. She was proud and independent, and could scarcely bring herself to accept even the shadow of a favour, but she yielded at last; a home of her own, and a friend like Mrs. Hare close by weighed down the scale, and she was introduced to several families in the neighbourhood, and so began her school. For a few months all went very well; then Mrs. Hare suggested some slight improvement she thought Miss Morgan might as well

make in some of her arrangements, and that lady having a certain fixed rule of her own, declined to make it. There was no actual unpleasantness in word or manner, but at once from that day Mrs. Hare's visits ceased; no entreaties on the part of Miss Morgan could induce her to explain what was wrong, and the intercourse which had been so agreeable to Miss Morgan was closed, by her being obliged to borrow money to pay the rent, which she had understood was to wait till she was better off. Mrs. Hare had a certain influence over the friends to whom she had introduced Miss Morgan, so one by one they showed themselves cool towards her, and until she became aware how kind and neighbourly the people of Beckford could be, she was exceedingly unhappy. Then illness came into the school, and one little girl died, and although it was a known fact that the illness had originated during the child's holidays at home, several miles off, most people outside Beckford blamed the town for it. Pupils fell off in consequence, and she had to move to another house. After this it was uphill work for a long time. But this had happened some years ago now, and Miss Morgan had long lived down all the unkindness and neglect and suspicion which her false friend had laid upon her; her school was prospering, and she had many friends. But the noontide of life had come to her, and every one knows that noon is the hottest and most trying

part in all the day, and so Miss Morgan found it, and though her religion made her most upright and conscientious, and duty was made on all occasions the principal consideration, and no self-denying kindness to the poor was neglected, yet it had never led her for perfect peace to the One unchanging Friend, and the hardest time of all life's battle-ground found her longing eagerly for, but as yet not finding, "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Then, too, her life was a very busy one, and quiet hours were hard to find, and although work is a most excellent thing, and indeed a necessity if we would rightly keep our moral and physical balance, yet it is quite possible to be too busy, to be so full of cares and anxieties for this world, that even our hours of prayer are invaded with disturbing thoughts. Come these must, over and over again, but we must at once cast them off on God, or the burden and heat of the day will be too much for us, and it is but lost labour which hinders our delight in God's word, or in His presence, and which takes all its refreshing meaning from the words of the Psalmist, "I will commune with my own heart and be still."

That the children feared her much and loved her little, she knew very well. Little Sophy, with her winning ways, had knocked loudly at the door of her heart, but she feared to open it, lest she should learn to love the child too much. The one of her pupils to

whom she was really most attached was Jessie, but the tendency to dream, the love for poetry, and the clinging affectionate disposition, all were so like what her own had been at the same age, that remembering her own hard life, she set to work to subdue and crush all these tendencies as she saw them, forgetting that God's ways, like His gifts, are various, and that no one ought to be a rule for another. So it had come to pass that of all her pupils Jessie loved her least, and had communicated quite enough of her sentiments to Alice to inspire her with a considerable awe and dread of her governess, so that when turning to see who called her, she saw Miss Morgan, she felt very frightened indeed, and her timid "Yes, ma'am," was only just audible.

"Have they left you alone, Alice?"

"Only for a little while, ma'am, thank you. I have been gathering shells for my mother to see how well I can move about."

"She will be very pleased, I am sure. But I have found a very nice cool nook, half way up the bank, quite sheltered from the sun. Do you think you could manage to reach it?"

"Oh, yes, with my crutches, I think I could."

"Well, then, come with me," and Miss Morgan wheeled the chair, while Alice walked by her side.

The ascent was rather difficult, but it was accomplished at last, and Alice was comfortably placed on

a shawl with a cushion behind her, Miss Morgan sat down by her side, and opened a great umbrella, which completely sheltered them as they sat, and she managed to fix it very firmly in the sand behind.

"Do you find that comfortable?" said Miss Morgan, as she carefully wrapped a corner of the shawl round Alice's shoulder, which was rather exposed to the breeze.

"Oh yes, ma'am, thank you, it is very nice; everything is; I don't know when a day has seemed so pleasant."

"You like the sea, then?"

"Yes, I love it dearly."

"Where have you seen it before?"

"At my old home at Allanmede, we could see it from every hill: but the place I used to stay at when I was a little girl was Deepwater Bay, about twelve miles from Allanmede; it was a lovely place."

"Yes, I used to know it quite well; but, Alice, do you come from Allanmede?"

"Yes, I was born there, and I don't think there can be a prettier place in all the world. Oh! I love it dearly."

"So do I, Alice; I was at school there."

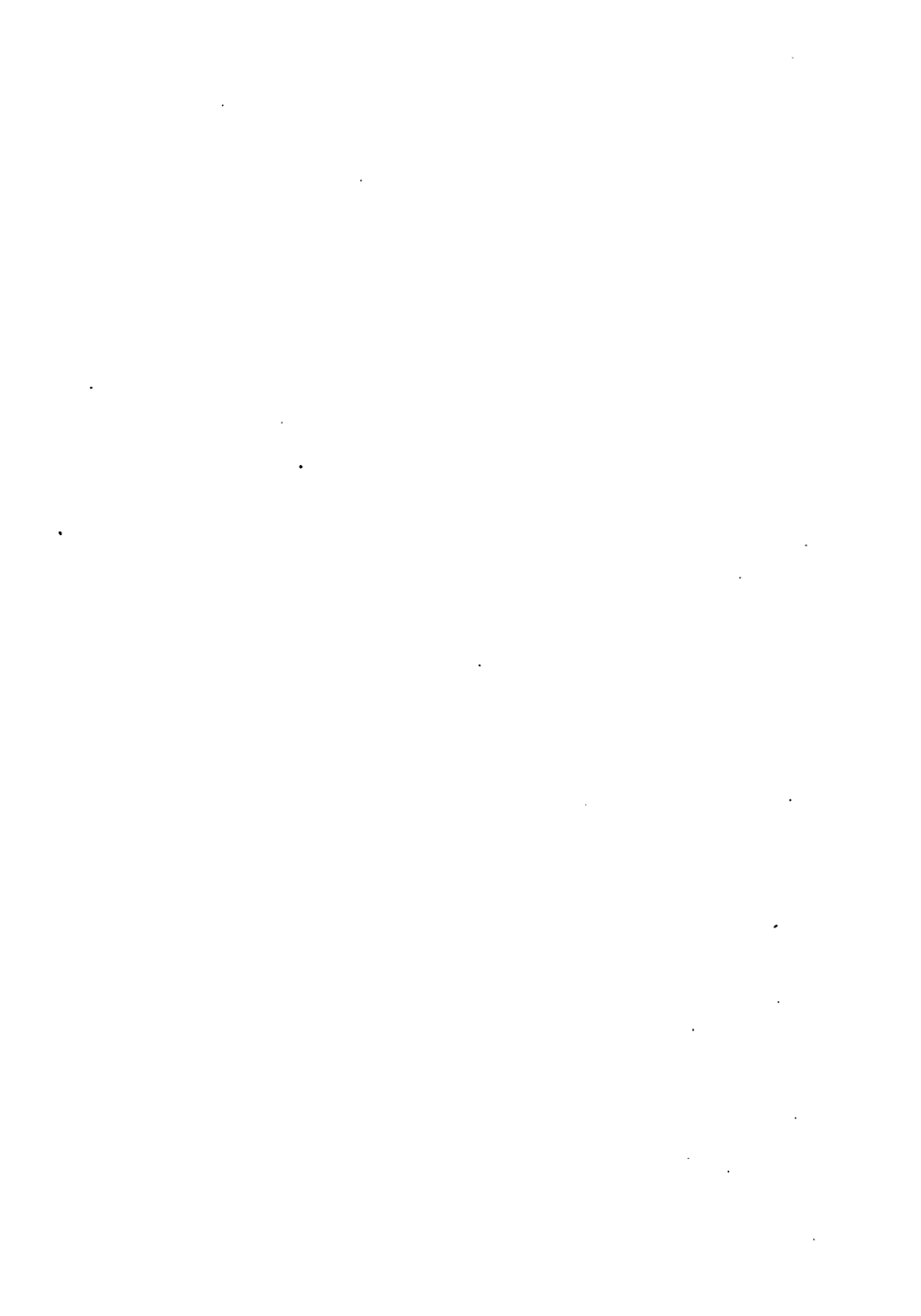
"Oh, were you, really?"

"Yes, at Abbey Tower. Is the dear old place a school still?"

"It was till about five years ago, and then Lord



'Alice was comfortably placed on a shawl with a cushion behind her; Miss Morgan sat down by her side.'—Page 110.



Allanmede said he wanted it for a laundry, I think, and the school was given up."

"Who had it when you knew it? What was the lady's name, I mean?"

"Miss Powercourt."

"Oh, I remember her well, she was the second teacher when I was there; but, Alice, you must tell me about the dear old place, I was very happy there. Is Mrs. Daventry living?"

"No, I don't remember her. There is a Mr. James Daventry, and Miss Fanny; she used to be very kind to me."

"Are the two lodges standing near the Lower Woods?"

"Yes, and there is one leading into the park."

"Covered with roses?"

"Yes."

"I remember it perfectly; and the old camp, and the fosse which the London Road crossed, and the stile where we could see the Isle of Wight?"

"I know the camp—it is full of cowslips every spring—and the fosse has the largest primroses and wood anemones I ever saw. I know the stile, too, but the trees have grown so high that the Isle of Wight is quite hidden."

"Did your grand-parents live at Allanmede?"

"Yes, on the Walnut Hill. Grandfather was a builder."

"Did he live in that old gable-roofed house, with the great walnut tree before it, near to the saw-pit?"

"Yes, that is the very house."

"I remember it, but I had forgotten the name."

"It seems so nice to talk to anyone who loves Allanmede. I thought till I knew Miss Jessie I could never like a new place."

"Who is the clergyman now?"

"Mr. Colville. Oh! I do miss him so, he is the very kindest old gentleman."

"*Old*, Alice?"

"Yes, ma'am, his hair is quite white, and Mrs. Colville's hair is gray, too. Did you know them?"

"I heard Mr. Colville preach once, but only once; he had then only just come to Allanmede, and his first Sunday was my last, and perhaps that is why I remember his sermon so well; it was on the words, 'Come unto Me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It may seem strange to you, Alice, but many sentences in that sermon are as fresh in my mind now as if I had heard it only yesterday, and yet it is forty years ago."

"It is one of my favourite texts, I think."

"One of them? What others have you?"

"'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee,'"

repeated Alice, reverently.

"Tell me some more."

“‘Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.’ Oh, I love that so much, and, ‘When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.’”

“Why do you like that so much?”

“Oh, because if we do wrong, it is such a comfort to know that God is so willing to pardon, that He sees when we are still a long way off. Oh, I cannot tell you how I love it; but I think no one can really prize it much who has not sinned, and been sorry for it.”

“Have you no other favourites?”

“Oh, yes, many: ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ That is one. Then I am very fond of this: ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.’”

“And you can realise the comfort of all these words in your pain and weakness, Alice?”

“Oh, yes, they are my great comfort.”

“You must be very happy.”

“I am indeed.”

There was silence for a short time. Miss Morgan was thinking of the peace in this poor girl's life which her own had missed. Presently she said, “The dear old church! does Mr. Colville preach out of the old stone pulpit?”

“Yes, always; but I could not often go to church, I was not strong enough to bear the organ.”

"It is strange how vividly everything comes back to me. I can see the sunshine as it fell through the window before us, and Mr. Colville's face and his dark hair; and then, too, the dear old churchyard, the wall-flowers, and the early roses, and the soft spring sky, and the thoughts I had that Sunday morning, all so fresh and bright and happy; and then it was all over. I was sent for home on Monday, and my dear mother died, and two days afterwards my dear father. You cannot wonder that it is all so fixed in my mind," said Miss Morgan, as if apologising to Alice for her weakness in being so touched by the mention of the old home.

"Oh, no, indeed; I remember the last Sunday that dear father was alive." And Alice told of the country walk and the dear old hymn.

"Say it," said Miss Morgan.

Alice repeated it as if she felt it, and the consequence was that Miss Morgan felt it too.

"There used to be laburnums, and lilacs, and pink hawthorn round the churchyard."

"So there are still, and the flowers in the vicarage-garden are always so beautiful. Mr. Colville is very fond of them, and once he gave me some nice thoughts about them I don't think I shall ever forget."

"Tell me about it."

"I had been ill, so ill that sometimes I could not collect my thoughts to pray, and I used to lie think-

ing about God and heaven; but I could not ask for anything, and I could not remember the hymns I used to repeat, and once I told Mr. Colville about it. And he said I was not to be unhappy, God was not a hard taskmaster, but a loving Father, and if I could not pray, or think as I wished, still, the very turning my mind to thoughts of Him would bring down a blessing; and, he told me, in my weakest hours I might always turn to Him, as the flowers turn to the sun. I thought about it very much then, and afterwards, when I was better, I watched the flowers, and saw how it was; and now, when I am ill, it is such a help to me, for, however weak I am, and unable to arrange my thoughts and words, the thought comes to me that I can turn to Him as the flowers turn to the sun, and it is such a comfort."

Miss Morgan's hand involuntarily closed over Alice's. It was a large, strong hand, and the firm, yet gentle touch on Alice's thin fingers gave her such a sense of sheltering protection that she took courage, and rested her head on Miss Morgan's lap. The sea-air had made her very sleepy, and the waves, with the music of their pleasant dash as they chased each other, soothed Alice as she listened, and presently Miss Morgan found she was fast asleep.

She moved her hand to draw Alice to a more comfortable resting-place within her arm, and then, gazing far out at sea, gave herself up to the enjoyment of a

quiet hour, in which her happy school-days, her bitter experiences of life since, her longing for the peace which Alice had, and she had not, were mingled with thoughts of Him who sees us when yet a great way off, and the very words she needed came into her mind—

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O! Lamb of God, I come!”

It was quite an hour afterwards, and Alice was still quietly sleeping, when Jessie and Sophy suddenly appeared, scrambling up the bank. There were unmistakable traces of tears on Miss Morgan's face, which the girls could not help seeing, but the strangest thing was that Miss Morgan seemed quite unconscious of it (she who was accustomed to condemn tears as something utterly foolish and weak), and said in a very gentle tone: “Hush, dears, Alice is asleep. What have you there?”

Jessie knelt down before her, and unfolded her handkerchief, where were some beautiful blossoms of the sea-side convolvulus.

“Are they not darlings?” she said.

“They are indeed. Where did you find them?”

“On the bank there; it is quite pink with them. Oh, Miss Morgan, I do wish you could come and see them.”

"When Alice wakes, I can; and what have you been doing, Sophy?"

"Oh, all sorts of things, it's such fun!" and as Sophy poked her little merry face up under the umbrella, Miss Morgan gave her a kiss.

Alice woke very soon, and was very much ashamed of having gone to sleep, and a good deal afraid that Miss Morgan would think her rude; but she was soon re-assured on this point, when she saw the two girls laughing, and the tall grave lady laughing too.

They all went together to the place all covered with convolvulus blossoms, and their thick leathery leaves. Those Jessie had gathered were already withered, so they left the others to bloom through their little day in peace, and then Miss Morgan was summoned for a consultation about the arrangement of the tables in the old boat-house, and the girls were told to follow.

"Why, Alice?" said Jessie, when they were left alone, "what *is* the matter? Miss Morgan has been crying like anything, it is easy to see that; but she wasn't a bit cross; I can't make it out."

"She is not cross at all. I like her very much indeed; but perhaps what made her cry was because we had been talking about Allanmède. She was at school there, and she was telling me about her being fetched home, and losing her father and mother both in one week. Oh, I think she must have had a great deal of sorrow."

"I never thought of that ; she is always stern and grave, but I thought it was because she was cross. Do you really mean to say, Alice, that she was at Allanmede ? How funny things are, to be sure."

"Yes, it's quite true, and she knows all the walks, and she heard Mr. Colville's first sermon ; it was the last Sunday she was at school ; she says it was forty years ago."

"Oh, what fun ! Now I know how old she is : I've often wondered, but now, if it's forty years since she left school, and she was fifteen then, of course she is fifty-five. Won't I crow over Marian ? She has always thought her older."

"But how do you know she was fifteen when she left school ?"

"Oh, because she is always saying, if any of the girls are stupid or idle, 'that she began to teach when she was fifteen, and that she never went to school after fifteen,' and so on."

"Well, then, I am sure, Miss Jessie, you can't wonder at her being grave.' Fancy teaching for forty years : it seems dreadful to me."

"Oh, teaching is great fun," said Jessie.

Alice laughed.

"It may be so to you, Miss Jessie, but keeping school is a very different thing."

"Well, there's no doubt about that, and I'll try not to bother her so."

"So will I," said Sophy, and with this laudable determination, the girls suddenly remembered that the boat-house was a long way off, so they left Alice, and ran for the Bath-chair, into which they packed her, and wheeled her to join the rest of the party.

Alice was very sleepy when the waggonette set her down at the toy-shop that night, and so was everyone ; but throughout it had been a most happy day, and the only tears that had been shed were those which had dropped from Miss Morgan's eyes, when Alice's words of peace connected with the dear old place they both loved so well had fallen like dew on her parched and weary heart ; and, oh ! what peace there was in the thought which came as she lay down to rest, that not only Alice in her weakness and pain, but she with her cares and griefs, might look up to a loving Friend, and turn to that exhaustless source of comfort "as flowers turn to the sun."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOLIDAYS.

THE holidays had commenced ; Miss Morgan's house was deserted by everyone except the servants and Fraulein, who wished to remain there the first fortnight. The grammar school was closed ; Mrs. McIntosh had gone on a tour in Switzerland with her husband, and left her garden to its fate, and Jessie and her brothers had set off to spend the holidays at their grandmamma's. No wonder that the next morning, as Alice prepared for Robin's appearance, she felt rather dull, and looked forward to six weeks without Miss Jessie as a very long time indeed.

And Mrs. Winter felt she should miss her quite as much. There was always sunshine in the face which looked up from the shade of her broad hat as she opened the toy-shop door. If Alice seemed tired, her anxious mother looked forward to Jessie's arrival as a sure means of refreshment ; and if (as was often the

case) she herself was feeling care-worn and weary, all worries seemed to vanish for the time, as she heard the merry voice with its frank and kindly greeting. Something of the outer life and freshness of the summer weather she always seemed to bring with her, and Mrs. Winter, as she helped Alice, said in a would-be cheerful tone which was not too successful, "Well, we won't grudge the dear child her holidays, bless her! sure enough she has earned them."

"Oh, mother, I do wish you could go with me this lovely morning; you never get out for a walk, and miss all the fine weather."

"Not quite that, dear, the shop's very sunny and pleasant. I should like to go with you indeed, but that's one of the things that can't be, so we must be content, and thankful the little town's so pleasant, and the people so cheery. Why there's the bell already, and the shop's not finished being dusted; customers don't come so early in a general way."

Alice saw who it was through the half-open door, and said at once, "It's the German lady at Miss Morgan's, mother; how nice and cool she looks."

That was quite true. Fraulein in her brown holland walking-dress looked as fresh as a daisy; she had a pretty little covered basket in her hand, and as she came forward, she said, "The morning is so fine, that out of doors seems better than within. I have come

to ask if Alice, your child, may spend it in the woods with me."

Alice came forward at this.

"Ah, you also are ready," said Fraulein. "Will you go with me?"

There was no reason why this very charming plan should not be carried out, except on Robin's account, who would have to go backwards and forwards twice, and both Mrs. Winter and Alice thought it would be too much for the old man.

Then Fraulein said he need only take them to the entrance of the wood; she should enjoy wheeling the chair, and would not hear of his being sent in the evening. So Alice fetched her wool-work, and her mother led the German lady through the little parlour and across the long room behind, and there at the outer door stood Robin, with a rose in his button-hole, and the chair all ready.

When the arrangement just made was explained to him, he seemed only half satisfied to leave Alice to anyone's care but his own, and he took a deal of persuading that Fraulein could manage quite well, and would take great care of her.

How deliciously cool the woods were that July morning! Both Fraulein and Alice had brought their work, but it seemed quite impossible to do it with so much that was bright and pretty around them. They went along very leisurely indeed, down grass-grown

paths, where startled rabbits ran across the foot-way, and past the banks and hollows where foxgloves were in bloom, and the cinque foil carpeted the rough ground with its delicate yellow beauty. There were crimson vetches twining over the rough bushes, and great wreaths of sweet honeysuckle higher up, which perfumed the air as they passed. All at once the road they were on brought them to a cleared space in the wood, which Alice had never seen, and she therefore had no idea that this was the moor of which Jessie often spoke. It burst upon them all at once, a mass of purple colour, just the tint of the bloom on a ripe plum.

"I can't think what makes it so blue," said Fraulein, "there must be other flowers besides heath."

'And so there were; as they came nearer, Alice called out:

"Oh, look at the lovely dark blue flowers, what are they?"

"Truly they are the flowers of the wild gentian; what richness, what depth of colour! Ah, no wonder, when this blue and the purple heath are so blended."

It certainly was very beautiful, and after gathering one or two of the flowers to examine at their leisure, and satisfying themselves that no more than three kinds of heath grew on the moor, namely, ling, the purple heath, and the delicate pink wax-like bells of the cross-leaved heath, they found a very convenient old

root of a tree, standing in a shady angle, whence the wolds, the purple moor, and the cool wood-shades could be seen, and then Fraulein began to talk, and Alice marvelled that she spoke English so well.

She told Alice of her own home in Germany near the Taunus mountains, of pleasant summer excursions over them, and of the pine woods in which at school in the hot weather they had been accustomed to spend whole days, having not only lessons, but all their meals out of doors. She spoke of ground which in spring was blue with violets, and of the birthday wreaths which the girls used to make, and Alice quite entered into the delight she expressed at having once found some pink fumitory in the shrubbery of a house near Beckford, only because that little flower had grown in abundance in her German home, and it was like seeing a friendly face.

Then she described the beautiful Rhine, with its castles and vineyards, and pictured the glories of Cologne cathedral, so that Alice felt she could almost see it. Then she went on to tell of Mainz, with its statue of Gutenberg, the inventor of printing, of whom Alice had been lately reading with Jessie. From one famous name she passed to another, and finding the eager listener knew but little of the history of the great Reformer, she told her the story of Luther in such stirring language, and with such deep religious feeling, that Alice's heart warmed, and her work

dropped from her fingers, as she drank in the well-known tale of that bold, brave life, and realised its nobility and God-given strength.

"Oh, I like that so much," she said, when Fraulein had finished.

Fraulein's knitting needles had been going fast all the time, but now she stopped and asked Alice if she had never read the "Chronicles of the Schönberg Cotta family?"

"No, I have not even heard of it."

"Well, I will lend it to you, it is about Luther. Among other things it speaks of the grandeur of hymns sung in the deep pine woods. Oh, I think that is so true! Pine woods always seem solemn to me, and suited to beautiful sacred chorales. Do you like to sing?"

"Oh, very much; but I wish you would sing to me now, while I work, that is if you don't mind."

Alice took up the footstool she was working for Mrs. McIntosh, and the German lady began to sing. She sang in her own language, and her rich sweet voice, with the grand sounding words, made most beautiful music, and Alice kept asking for more.

"That has been a great treat," she said, when the hymns were ended.

"Ah! you may not enter into it, but music, which is my great delight, brings also my great trial. Words are poor to describe the sensations of one who has to

listen during all her teaching duties to that strum, strum, thump, thump, on the piano, where the girls exercise their fingers. Surely they have no ears ! and where are their hearts ? ‘Have you no soul ?’ I am constrained to ask at times, ‘that you so destroy the beautiful ?’ but I might as well speak to the winds ; on it continues, strum, strum, bang, bang ; and ah, the false notes ! Yet I have one comfort, I do not instruct them ; if I did, it would fare ill, both with them and me.”

“Does Miss Jessie play well ?”

“Jessie ? yes, the child has soul ; but her lesson is practised at home. If she were as proficient in the German grammar as in music I might be satisfied ; but yet I would not be harsh, of late she has much improved.”

“She has been teaching me since Easter.”

“So Miss Morgan informed me, and the tidings pleased me well : and doubtless that is one reason why she has herself improved, for nothing assists one so much in learning as teaching others.”

This was good news for Alice.

“It is a pleasure for you to learn ?” asked Fraulein.

“Oh, yes, and then Miss Jessie is so kind.”

The two spent a very pleasant day together, and it was only one of many during the fortnight that Fraulein remained in Beckford. Almost every fine day some excursion was planned and carried out, or

if it rained, there was the delightful book to read, which Fraulein had lent her. It was of great benefit to Alice to associate with one so well educated as her German friend, who had travelled much, and could tell her a great deal, not only of her native land, but also of Switzerland and France. Then once they went together to a quiet week-day service in the church, when the soothing prayers and heart-felt hymns were full of refreshment to Alice, and led her to hope that before long she might be strong enough to go regularly on Sundays with her mother. There had been scarcely time to realise Jessie's absence with any degree of pain, before the fortnight of Fraulein's stay expired ; and then as if Alice was not to be left to feel dull, the very day of the German lady's departure brought Mrs. Winter a letter from Charlotte saying that she hoped to be with her during the coming week, and so all was delighted preparation in the little house behind the toy-shop.

Mrs. Winter went to the station to meet Charlotte, and when she reached home her first exclamation after kissing her sister was, "My dear Alice ! how you have grown ! and how much better you look !" And then began that eager and interesting conversation into which long-parted members of a family plunge directly they meet, as if every word must be said under a penalty the very first day, utterly ignoring the fact of a lengthened time before them. In this

case there was much to tell on both sides, for Charlotte had not been home since last July, and then home was at Allanmede. Alice had kept her pretty well informed on all matters of interest, but there is always much which cannot be written, and Miss Jessie and Robin, Mr. Eaton and lessons, the Bath-chair, Mrs. McIntosh and Miss Morgan were all jumbled together in Alice's details of kindness and attention. Mrs. Winter had to interpose occasionally when she found Charlotte mistaking one lady for the other, or otherwise losing the thread of the somewhat disconnected and bewildering narrative ; but it was all very pleasant for Charlotte to hear, and her surprise and joy at seeing her sister so much stronger and more active was a great encouragement to her mother, who watched Alice so anxiously from day to day that she was less likely to see the really marked improvement in strength and appearance than one who was a comparative stranger.

The good elder daughter would have at once insisted upon attending to the shop every morning in order to let her mother enjoy the fresh air with Alice, but this Mrs. Winter would not allow, as Charlotte needed it after her indoor life at Norwich ; but at last they agreed to take it in turns, and so each had the benefit of the summer air, and Alice's delight was great when she saw her dear mother's face less careworn, and marked the improvement in her health

which the exercise brought. Alice and Charlotte talked often together of the school-plan, and though the elder sister felt anxious lest one so delicate should work too much, she could not but take pleasure in the scheme on her own account as well as her sister's.

Charlotte's holidays were to last a month, and though the weather became rainy after the first fortnight, there were many happy days in the little room behind the toy-shop, for it was her custom to take advantage of such weather to furbish up the wardrobe of the family, and while she stitched Alice read aloud, or occasionally, as at such times customers were few, all three would work and let their tongues fly as fast as their needles, and it comforted Charlotte exceedingly to know how, in a perfectly strange place, her mother and sister had found already so many friends.

The footstool was finished, and now Alice was bent on a surprise, to greet her dear Miss Jessie on her return. To this end the very prettiest work-basket in the shop was selected, some bright blue silk was bought, and Charlotte showed her sister how to quilt it. It would be difficult to say how much grateful care from all three of the Winters went into the lining of that little basket, nor how many times Alice stopped in her work to turn it over and say enquiringly, "You really think it will be pretty enough to give her?" nor how often the reply was (in variations,

of course, for perhaps the same words over and over again would have been less impressive), "It is beautifully done, dear Alice, and I am sure Miss Jessie will be delighted with it."

Meanwhile the good habits which Jessie had been cultivating were being attended to during her holiday-time, and grandmamma thought her much improved. And certainly there was a change in her; she was as merry as ever, but nothing like so careless, and there was an air of quiet content which pervaded each day's employments even when her own will had to be given up, which impressed the dear old lady, who wished no greater blessing for her eldest granddaughter than that she might learn her life's lesson of meekness and lowliness and persevering patience at her Saviour's feet, and indeed what higher good could she have desired for her? The words, "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you," need only to be put into practice for their truth to be proved, and Jessie in her earnest endeavours to be steady and persevering had drawn very near to Him, though as yet she was scarcely aware of it. Some think that sorrow and care *only* are the messengers which can bring us to God; but those who thus judge make a great mistake. Many young hearts who have been sheltered through a happy childhood and youth, have brought their very happiness as an offering to their loving Father, and in

praise for His mercies and prayer for grace to use His gifts aright have realised that blessing of communion with Him which only those can receive who thus draw nigh to Him. Then, too, how many sins need forgiveness, which only the precious blood of God's dear Son can wash away! how much wisdom is required in choosing what is right, how much training in love and patience and all Christian graces which are the gift of the blessed Spirit of God! Surely with all these needs daily reminding us of our helplessness we should not wait till sorrow and care come with their weight of anguish, before we learn how full of compassion and mercy is the Saviour, whose name we bear, and how ready to help in every time of need! No one can really meet great trials in a right spirit who has not had a daily preparation in fighting with smaller difficulties and submitting in more trivial things. And then how sweet, when the hour of sorrow comes, to know that we have not now for the first time to seek God's face, but to be able with a long experience of His help and care and tender love to turn to Him, our tried and faithful Friend, in perfect confidence as "the flowers turn to the sun."

And Jessie in her daily life, as more and more she tried to do whatever came to her, as for God and in His sight, and thus felt constrained to do her very best in everything, was beginning to find how powerful was the Friend whose help and strength she sought

before entering on each day's work or pleasure. And whereas at first it had been the fear of failing in her duty which had made her rise early and prepare for it, now she felt that to miss the quiet time of prayer and reading which sent her forth armed to the battle would be a very great trial indeed, so though lessons were put on one side, and only very small grievances interrupted the constant flow of holiday enjoyment, her morning hour was strictly kept, and a new meaning began to show itself in the blessed words which are given to be a light to our feet and a lantern to our path, and she was realising in a clearer knowledge of God's great love, and of all that love had done for her, the words which Alice had quoted on the day of their first Bible lesson, "They shall all be taught of God."

CHAPTER IX.

OLD FRIENDS.

AND Miss Morgan; how was she faring?

When she first left home, she went to Filey, there to spend a fortnight or more with some of the friends she had made in the neighbourhood of Beckford; for the time to be spent afterwards they thought she had no settled plan. They did not know of the conversation with Alice on the sea-side bank which had roused old memories that would not be quieted, and perhaps they would not have entered into her longing to return to the well-loved place where so many happy days had been spent. At any rate she never sounded them to find out; but when her visit was over, she announced her intention of going to London, and went, though everyone wondered that she should care to go there in July, and when she left them they only remarked as the train set off, "Well there is no accounting for taste." But Miss Morgan only stayed in London two

days ; on the third she went to a certain great station, and there took a ticket for Allanmede.

It was a restless feeling which sent her there, a longing to see old faces (and she knew from Alice's mention of Miss Daventry that one at least was there, and why should there not be more?) a craving for some of the old, fresh brightness and peace which were so associated in her mind with Sundays there, and the dear old church and the whispering trees —a yearning for her lost youth, such as the poet's must have been when he wrote the words :—

“ I can see the breezy dome of groves,
The shadows of Deering's woods ;
And the friendships of old and the early loves
Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves
In quiet neighbourhoods.
And the verse of that sweet old song,
It flutters and murmurs still :
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.' ”

It was evening when she left the train at the little station four miles from Allanmede, where an omnibus, whose dimensions of the band-box species did not say much for the railway traffic in that part of the world, except for those who had carriages of their own. Miss Morgan took her seat in it, opposite an elderly woman, whose face she scanned as the omnibus moved off, with the vague hope that in its care-worn lines some trace of a familiar look might satisfy her ; but it did not

appear, and presently she found out that her fellow passenger was a stranger to Allanmede.

Miss Morgan decided to sleep one night at the inn, and look for lodgings the next day. How strange and yet how familiar the little town looked, as the omnibus toiled half way up the hill to the "Allanmede Arms." The same old names over the shops she remembered so well, the same old trees with their swaying branches rising high above the gray stone wall at the top of High Street, where another road crossed it; the same twang in the voices of the people loitering about the inn-yard as the omnibus stopped—the twang, though unmusical enough, yet from old association so much more agreeable to her ears than the broad north country dialect to which for so long she had been accustomed. Then mastering the emotion which the place awakened within her, she spoke as any indifferent person might speak, and having secured her rooms for the night, went upstairs.

Very early the next morning she went out, up by the churchyard first and into it, where the morning sunbeams were glancing bright on the quiet graves where the sleepers rested in their long repose, waiting for the dawn of that blessed day, when this corruptible shall put on immortality. The roses were blooming on the church, as of old, and the trees were green as ever, but how many stones had names on them which she remembered well, and knew now it would be vain

days: at the time she went to a certain great station,
and there took a train for Allamode.

It was a restless feeling which sent her there, a
longing to see old faces and she knew from Alice's
mention of Miss Laverney that one at least was there,
and why should there not be more? a craving for
some of the old, first impressions and peace which
were so associated in her mind with Sundays there,
and the dear old church and the whispering trees
—a yearning for her lost youth such as the poet's
must have been when he wrote the words:—

"I can see the better home of graves.

The shadows of Teeming's woods:

And the memories of old and the early loves
Come back with a Sabbath sound, as if graves

It goes neighbouring.

And the verse of that sweet old song,

It flutters and murmurs still:

"A boy's will is the wind's will,

And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

It was evening when she left the train at the
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much for the railway traffic.
except for those who had been there
Morgan took her seat
whose face she saw
the vague hope th
of a familiar lo

to seek! She looked at the old sun-dial over the south porch, and the sound of the clock above it striking seven, was like the voice of an old friend, but when just before it ceased the Castle clock began to chime, and its thin, though musical voice (which till that moment she had quite forgotten) blended with the deeper tones sounding from the church tower, the old, old time came back to her so vividly, that the tears fell fast as she turned away to continue her walk.

She had ordered breakfast at half-past eight, and so had plenty of time to satisfy herself on some points about which she was specially curious. The vicarage opposite the church gates was not the old one she remembered, but a newer and much handsomer building. The lodge leading into the park had its garment of roses as of old, but some of the thatched cottages on Walnut Hill had given place to red brick buildings, with slated roofs. Still on the whole the upper part of the town at least was little altered, considering her forty years' absence, and she returned to the inn fairly satisfied with her ramble.

She took another after breakfast, and bent her steps to where she remembered the post office in the lowest of the three roads, but it was not to be found, a saddler's shop stood in its place, and a row of important-looking dwelling houses stared at her with an unpleasing newness. She toiled up the hill again, and there, just past the inn, so close that she had missed

it, she found in a grocer's shop the railed off desk and abundance of papers having reference to mails to all parts of the world, which looked very official indeed.

On enquiring for rooms, she found there were two to let above the shop, and as they were pleasant, and everything seemed clean and nice, to say nothing of the name over the door being one she recollected, she engaged them, and took up her quarters there that evening.

The next day was Sunday, and as she looked from her window at the different groups of church-goers turning out of the doors in High Street, the words came with great force into her mind :—

“ Strange to me now are the forms I meet,
When I visit the dear old town ;
But the native air is pure and sweet,
And the trees that o’ershadow each well known street,
As they balance up and down,
Are singing the beautiful song,
Are sighing and whispering still :
‘ A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.’ ”

Then she joined the throng all moving upwards, and presently found herself within the church, and being ushered into the ladies’ corporation pew, which she remembered so well, just opposite the old stone pulpit. It was well that others were in it besides herself, for a crowd of memories filled her mind, and every pillar and window was strikingly familiar, and even the

galleries and high pews, which so spoilt the look of the otherwise beautiful building, making it appear much less spacious than it was, were like old friends to her. Then the service began, and if Alice had not prepared her for a great change, she would scarcely have recognised in the venerable-looking clergyman who stood up in the reading-desk, the Mr. Colville whose first sermon she had heard forty years ago in that very church. There were strange faces all around her, and she felt herself alone and a stranger amongst them ; but the service soothed her, and she was more calm when Mr. Colville entered the pulpit opposite to her, and gave out his text :

“Thou shalt remember all the way by which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness.”

At first she thought she must be mistaken, so singularly appropriate were the words to her ; but they were repeated, and as the sermon went on, Miss Morgan took them as a message from God.

The clergyman had no idea with what eagerness he was listened to by the tall, grave-looking lady opposite, who never once removed her eyes from his face the whole time he was preaching. He had no idea as he spoke in general terms of the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness, and of God's purpose in leading them, and drew thence much practical and personal comfort for each Christian who might look back on

all the way by which he too had been led, that to one listening heart his words were falling as oil on the waters of a troubled sea, and that the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to bring all the things of God to our remembrance, was carrying the message of peace so home to one tempest-tossed soul, that it was only by an effort she restrained herself from audibly uttering the assent which rose to her lips as he ended his sermon with the calm words of conviction : " He led them forth by the right way."

Miss Morgan threaded her homeward way among the strange faces, and when she reached her room, shut herself in alone with God. She went no more out that day, but sat in the Sabbath quietness thinking over the past forty years with a chastened heart.

Next morning she enquired of her neat landlady which was the house where the Winters had lived ? and when she added that she came from Beckford, where they now were, she had enough to do to answer questions, for it seemed that a great respect was felt for the family. She found the house and went down to the river where the ships were, and then walked far out into the country under shady trees, with the summer sky above her and God's own peace within. In the afternoon she sallied forth again, and soon found herself on the terrace, where was situated the house known to the townspeople as Lawyer Daventry's. It stood on the sunny side of

the street, and its shining brass knocker and door-knob, and the immense laurustinas within the iron palings looked just the same as she remembered them when she was at school, and used to go home now and then with Fanny Daventry to tea. They had been great friends, and since their parting Fanny had more than once written, but when troubles crowded thick and fast into her life, Miss Morgan had had no heart to reply to her letters, and the correspondence dropped. It had cost her a great effort to make this call, and perhaps it was that which gave the decided application to the knocker which startled the echoes of the quiet street, and brought the heads of several old ladies and one or two young ones to the windows to look out, and caused them to say, "It is the strange lady who was in church yesterday; I wonder who she is?"

Miss Daventry was at home, and Miss Morgan was shown into the pleasant drawing-room she knew so well; there were photographs about, and the portrait of Mrs. Daventry, whom she well remembered, looked peacefully at her from the wall. Then the door opened and a plump little lady entered, whose fair white and pink complexion and soft light hair untinged with grey, made her look youthful still, and in spite of all Miss Morgan's efforts, when she saw the old familiar smile she broke down utterly, and the two friends had a very tearful meeting. It was very plea-

sant for all that, and there was something most heart-warming in the way Miss Daventry welcomed her, and begged her to come and stay there and leave the post office ; but that Miss Morgan would not hear of, and her friend contented herself with securing her as often as she could, and in reviving old friendships, which was very agreeable to her who had felt herself friendless so long.

There were more of her old friends living than she had at first expected, and she soon knew the clergyman and his wife, and found them as delightful as Alice had led her to believe. They were very glad to hear of her and to know that she was so much stronger, and some little tokens of remembrance were entrusted to Miss Morgan's care for her and for her mother.

After the first week it was wonderful how Miss Morgan enjoyed her stay at Allanmede ; her heart warmed towards the children and grand-children of her old friends, and as her cold, stiff manner thawed under the influence of kindly feelings, it was refreshing to find herself affectionately welcomed by girls of the same age as those who at school were in such awe of her. It made her feel anxious to be at home again, that she might unbend and rule her little kingdom with a milder sway. When at length she left the quiet little town on the hillside, it was with a softened heart, in which were stored not only old

memories but new hopes for the future. Especially had it done her much good to be often with her old schoolfellow. In their school days there had been much mutual affection, though considerable intellectual inequality ; but now Miss Morgan had the same thought in listening to Miss Daventry that had come to her after talking with Alice at Saltby, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

"Who *can* mother be talking to so energetically?" said Charlotte as the two sisters sat together working one afternoon, a day or two before Jessie's return.

"I'm sure I don't know ; listen ! Oh ! that is Miss Morgan's voice, I feel sure ; but I don't know who else there is."

"I do then !" exclaimed Charlotte jumping up ; "it is Miss Daventry ; it can't be anyone else."

"Nonsense, Charlotte, how can——"

But here the door opened, and Miss Morgan entered with another lady—and Charlotte was right ; it *was* Miss Daventry—the dear, kind teacher at the Sunday school, whose Bible-class the eldest sister had attended till the time she left home to be apprenticed, and who had been a true, kind friend to the Winters then and ever since.

Miss Daventry knew all about John Fry, and had a shrewd guess at the reason why the marriage was so long delayed, and there was a feeling in her heart of

great respect for him and for Charlotte, who were so patiently waiting and working in the trust that God would give them in His own time the happiness that seemed so long delayed. It was very delightful to Mrs. Winter to find that Alice was thought looking so much better ; and how very pleasant it was to see a well-known face again, and to hear the Allanmede news !

“To think,” said Miss Daventry, “that when you wrote to me, Alice, you should have mentioned Miss Jessie and her kindness, and that neither I nor you should have known that the lady who had taught her what she was teaching you was a dearly-loved school-fellow of mine ! But now here we are all brought together as happily as can be, I think we all ought to be very thankful.”

There was no doubt at all about that in the minds of any of the little party. Presently Miss Morgan opened a travelling basket she had with her and said, “I have some little presents from Mr. Colville for you, Mrs. Winter, indeed, for you all ;” and then she took out first a little packet, which, when Mrs. Winter opened, she found to contain two small bronze easels, and in one was a photograph of Mr. Colville, and in the other was one of his wife.

“Oh, how very good ! it is the dear old gentleman to the life ; look, Alice, he seems as if he were speaking ! and Mrs. Colville, too, with her beautiful gray

curls—oh ! they could have sent me nothing I should value so much,” said Mrs. Winter as she placed them on the mantel-shelf on each side of the little time-piece, which did not go, but was always kept in the post of honour, because it had belonged to her husband.

“This is for Miss Winter, from Mrs. Colville,” and Miss Morgan handed Charlotte a copy of “The Pathway of Promise ;” “and this is Alice’s,” as she gave her the first series of “Hymns of Faith and Hope.”

The books gave very great satisfaction, and then Miss Morgan took out an awkward-looking parcel and a flat, thick packet, and placing them in Alice’s hands, would have moved to go if Miss Daventry had not detained her.

“Are they for me ?” asked Alice.

“Yes ; I wished to bring you something, my dear, and I thought perhaps it would give you most pleasure to have some views of your old home, and a stereoscope ; I only hope I have chosen the right places.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you, ma’am,” said Alice in great delight ; and one photograph after another was looked at through the stereoscope with enjoyment so intense, that Miss Morgan was more than repaid for any trouble she might have had in searching for favourite views. “Here is one of the churchyard,” said Charlotte, “and yes—oh ! yes, it *is* the grave !”

Yes ; there it was with its simple head-stone, so precious to the widow and her children ; it would not bear looking at then, so it was put aside, but they wondered very much whether or not the selection of that particular view had been accidental or intended. One day afterwards Miss Daventry told them that Miss Morgan had had it taken on purpose, and oh ! how they loved her for it !

A rainy evening was a great boon, and over and over again the twelve photographs were looked at and admired, new beauties appearing every time ; certainly Miss Morgan had thought to some purpose, for the pleasure she had given was a lasting one, and endeared her for ever to Mrs. Winter and her daughters.

Two days afterwards Jessie returned home ; school work began the next morning, so she did not visit the toy-shop till the afternoon, but then, as the church-clock was striking four, the well-known voice was heard in the shop, and teacher and pupil, to say nothing of Mrs. Winter and Charlotte, had a very happy meeting.

" I don't know how to thank you all for the lovely work-basket," she said, thanking each in turn : " I think it is perfectly beautiful : blue is my favourite colour, and I really believe I shall like work better when I use this nice basket, it looks so inviting."

There were not many lessons this afternoon, there was so much to tell, and all the photographs had to

be admired, and Jessie's appreciation of them charmed Alice beyond measure ; the views were so very lovely, and Miss Morgan's kindness was a thing she marvelled at to herself, though out of respect for Alice's feelings, she made no remark on it. She was much struck with Charlotte's likeness to her mother ; she had never thought Mrs. Winter's care-worn face so good-looking ; but then as she turned to Alice she met the same beautiful dark eyes, which she had so often admired, and thought silently of the wonderful impression which suffering and anxiety can make on the countenance. A halo of great interest was round Charlotte in Jessie's estimation, and on the first opportunity she eagerly asked Alice if she approved of the school scheme ?

" Oh, dear yes!" was the reply, " she thinks it altogether charming."

" Does Mr. Fry know?"

" No, we are going to wait a little while before telling him."

" I think you are really wonderfully better, Alice."

" Yes, Miss Jessie ; that I certainly am. I hope to go to church next Sunday."

" Do you really?"

" Yes, Mr. Eaton came a few days ago, and I told him I meant to try. How very kind he is!"

" Well, I'm very glad you find him so ; he used to be very different before Mrs. Eaton died, since then he has been dreadfully melancholy."

"He did not seem so the other day ; and he asked me if I felt going out in the chair had done me good, and when I told him it had very much indeed, he said he was very glad, and then he told me he wished to make me a present of it ; was it not kind of him ?"

"It was indeed ; and so it is really yours ?"

"Yes—altogether."

"Well, Alice, it is a mystery to me how you soften people. I'm sure Miss Morgan has not been like herself since that day at Saltby when you were with her ; and now to think of Mr. Eaton ! but it is really very nice."

The next day Charlotte went back to Norwich, and the two left at home felt by no means too cheerful without her ; but Alice's hope for the future helped her mother to look forward with much comfort, especially as there really seemed a settled improvement in her health. In the evening Robin took her to the woods by way of the grammar-school, as he had something to remark to Mrs. McIntosh about the planting of a new fern she had brought home with her. As the chair was wheeled through the gates Alice saw Mrs. McIntosh contemplating the rock-work in company with Miss Morgan, who looked up kindly as Robin and his charge came near.

"It weean't grow i' that how," exclaimed the old man, as he looked at the fern, which its owner had placed in the most exposed part of the rock-work ;

and then he went on to explain his reasons to Mrs. McIntosh, while Miss Morgan came up to Alice and said she would go to the woods with her, and Robin might come to meet them when he had settled the affairs of the fernery. Robin needed some persuasion to agree to this, but yielded at last, and so Miss Morgan and Alice left the gardeners and went on to the woods.

They were purple with heath, and all round them were corn-fields ripening, and the glimpses of the wolds, which could be caught between the trees, were warm and brown, and wearing an aspect quite unlike that which in spring had so delighted Alice, but it was beautiful nevertheless.

Miss Morgan sat by the chair and talked, of Allan-mede principally, for Alice was as little likely to weary of listening to accounts of her old home as Miss Morgan was of giving them.

"I left Miss Daventry busy writing letters," she said, "so many came by the afternoon post that she begged me to leave her, which was why you found me at the grammar-school. I am very glad now that it so happened I went there instead of to Lowford, as I first intended."

Alice felt so too, and they were soon engaged in a conversation very interesting to them both, and there was something in the kind sympathy shown in Miss Morgan's manner which drew her young companion out in spite of herself, and perhaps the quiet of the

evening suggested a question which the lady presently asked.

“You know what day-dreams are, Alice?”

“Yes, ma’am, at least I think so. I know what it is to have sweet thoughts come to me in my waking hours, far sweeter than any which come when I am asleep; they always seem sent by God to comfort me.”

“Tell me of them.”

“I remember one—it was at Allanmede when we were in great trouble once—at least the trouble was very great to us, and the worst was we could see no way out of it, and the more I thought about it the worse it seemed, and it made me so unhappy I could not see comfort in anything. One day I was quite worn out with thinking about it, and mother sent me to lie down. I could not sleep, but I fell into a dreamy state, and then I thought I was walking along a very narrow path indeed where there was only room for one to walk at once, and it was very stony and uneven. On my right hand was a high bank covered with thorns and brambles, and on my left there was a chasm between two hills, oh! so fearfully dark and deep, it made me dreadfully giddy to look down into it, and I feared to go on; but a voice seemed to say I must, and I began to walk; but I kept looking down into the chasm, and once I slipped and should have been quite lost, only just then a hand took hold of mine, and a voice said gently ‘Follow Me, and look

up,' and then I knew it was Jesus calling me, and I rose. We went on in perfect silence, and once or twice I looked down into the darkness, and He repeated in a grieved voice, 'Look up, my child, look up!' After that I did, and I shall never forget how beautifully blue the sky looked, and how soft the fleecy clouds were, and although the stones hurt my feet, and the thorns caught me sometimes, I felt quite peaceful holding that kind hand, and following close in those footsteps. Presently night came on, and it was very dark indeed ; but still the voice kept saying, 'Look up,' and so I kept looking, and presently I saw a star in the darkness, and then another, and the more I looked the more stars I saw, till the sky was quite bright. So we walked on all the night, and presently the dawn broke, and when the sun burst forth in his glory, I was in a wide and beautiful country—the chasm was quite out of sight, the danger was over, and in my heart I heard the words, 'He brought me forth into a place of liberty, because He had a favour unto me.' Oh, it helped me so, and by-and-by we got over our trouble ; but now whenever I feel tempted to dwell on difficulties or sorrows, I always remember the words, 'Follow Me, and look up.'"

Miss Morgan thought how much of the bitterness of her life might have been spared if she had only done this ; but she merely said, "Tell me of another."

"I have one great favourite. It was once when I was so very ill I could not move or work, and it seemed so difficult to be good and patient, while every one else I saw was active and strong, and I fretted about it very much. But one day—I shall never forget it—I was sitting out in the old boat by the river-side, watching the ships on the river and the lambs and sheep in the meadows opposite, and then I lay back and closed my eyes and it seemed as if I saw a shepherd with his flocks crossing the mountains. It was early morning, and everything looked bright, and I noticed one little lamb that seemed more lively and happy than the rest as it skipped and frisked about at some distance from the shepherd. All at once from an unseen hand a stone was thrown which lamed the poor little lamb, and it fell down on the soft grass. The shepherd was a good way off, and the sheep who were near it only came and looked at the poor little thing, and then went on. I thought I knew exactly how it felt in its suffering, quite unable to walk to its home across the mountains, quite unable to do its part, helpless and useless. Then it began to bleat in a low tone, but at the very first sound the shepherd turned, and when he came near, he took up the little lamb and laid it in his bosom, and carried it tenderly and softly over the mountains. And I thought that as it lay there so soft and warm, it thought little of the pain which brought it so near the heart of

the Good Shepherd. Then when they reached home, the shepherd bound up the wound, and after a while it became well again; but always after that it kept closer than any of the flock to its kind friend, and though it was always rather lame, it never regretted the suffering which had brought it so near the heart of the Good Shepherd. Oh! I love that dream so very much."

Miss Morgan was thinking how different were Alice's day-dreams from those feverish visions which too often come to us in our hasty eager youth. "My dear child," she said, as she laid her hand on that of the deformed girl with the gentle touch Alice remembered so well on the day at Saltby, "thank God for whatever suffering has coloured all your thoughts with heavenly tints like these." She stopped, for the tears were falling and her voice failed her; but there was something infinitely touching in Alice's simple, child-like faith, and the quiet words "I do thank Him" seemed to furnish the key-note to the sweet, peaceful music of her life.

And Miss Morgan thought of the words, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

CHAPTER X.

"A HEART AT LEISURE FROM ITSELF."

SEPTEMBER came, and its fresh, cool enlivening breezes did Alice so much good that the fresh air and judicious treatment of the past six months began really to tell upon her in increasing strength and consequent activity. She moved about the house without crutches, and with their aid went to the different shops for her mother, and even walked the half mile to the grammar-school one evening, when she had some work to take home. Better still, she was able now to attend to the shop sometimes and set her mother free to breathe the fresh air and take a little exercise, so that Mrs. Winter, as well as her daughter, gained strength. Alice had a very sweet voice, and as she sang at her work her mother's heart listened thankfully, and she thought other cares would become light by comparison if only her delicate girl should at last grow strong.

Meanwhile the "School Fund" was growing steadily. Mrs. McIntosh kept Alice employed with the various little fanciful devices for comfort which the head master's wife thought necessary for her drawing-room, so that with banner-screens, ottomans, and an elaborate border for a table-cloth, Alice had constant work for her fingers—quite as much as she could accomplish in fact, for she studied diligently, and Mr. Marshall was very particular in insisting on two hours out of doors at least every day.

Jessie was very anxious to give her pupil an extra half hour daily now that she was learning so well and seemed able to bear it ; but although she turned the matter over and over again in her mind, she did not see how it could be done without neglecting her home duties, so she gave it up at last, only setting her wits to work to give Alice so much variety in the one hour that she had double to do afterwards. This teaching and explaining, and contriving ways and means to make the best of a limited space of time, did Jessie very great good ; it was impossible to dream so much as formerly when her mind was forced to fix itself on a given object, and much to her astonishment she found that her story-books and poetry were more delightful than ever when they came in the way of luxury, and were no longer made of the first importance. She felt herself sadly backward when, after only six months' study, Alice took up fractions

with the greatest ease. Jessie frankly owned that she had advanced no farther, and asked help of her pupil when Miss Morgan put her into a new rule; thenceforward the two worked together, and Jessie profited considerably. Alice had a very clear head, and whereas at one time Jessie had termed it a barbarous practice to have poetry to parse, and called it almost as horrid as pulling a flower to pieces (which in prosecuting the study of botany she had often to do), she began now to exercise her reasoning powers and to take pleasure in "anatomising a sentence," which was an expression her brother Tom had taught her some time ago, when he used to find her in tears with poetry and grammar before her, lamenting her hard lot and indignantly giving to the science of language every hard name which her own or her brothers' vocabulary could furnish.

It was one day late in September, that Mrs. Winter had to go to Lincoln on business connected with her shop, and Alice, left in charge, was re-arranging a packet of wools which the caprices of a customer had left in somewhat bewildering disorder, when the little bell rang, and Fraulein entered.

"You here, Alice? and you find you can do it without fatigue?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, ma'am, thank you; mother had to go to Lincoln, and I can manage most comfortably," and Fraulein noticed that she moved without her crutches.

"Ah! the lovely dolls!" she said, noticing some which in make and attire were decidedly French.

Alice displayed them to still greater advantage, and asked Fraulein if she would be so kind as to tell her what the printing meant which was on the box they had come in.

The sentence was a simple one, relating to the price, and when Fraulein had quickly translated it, she asked: "Then you do not understand the language, Alice?"

"Oh, no."

This was a state of things astonishing to the German lady, to whom French was as natural as her own tongue, and she said eagerly: "Would you not like to learn?"

"For some things I should very much; but then I am never likely to go to France, or to have to do with French people."

"It is quite impossible to say what one may have to do in the course of a life. But even in this business, for instance, some knowledge of French would be of use."

"Yes, it certainly would; and in reading books I am often puzzled by quotations, only Miss Jessie is good enough to explain."

Fraulein said no more on the subject, but inquired for some knitting-cotton, and before she left the shop,

two or three other customers came in, so that Alice soon forgot all about the French.

The German lady, however, did not. She went home and consulted with Miss Morgan, and the next day came and proposed to Alice to give her lessons twice a week, if she would go to the school for half-an-hour every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon.

The plan was a charming one, and Alice signified her grateful acceptance of Fraulein's kindness, and astonished Jessie very much that afternoon when she communicated it to her.

Now Jessie having taken Alice in hand, had a sort of feeling that she did not want any help in instructing her. But she was too generous to give heart-room to so unworthy a thought, as soon as she remembered the advantage it would be to Alice, and although it did at first give her a pang when she found her entire care was to be interfered with, she was able with perfect truthfulness to say, "That will be very nice, Alice, and you are sure to get on; I am very glad."

"I knew you would be, Miss Jessie."

The words gave Jessie a little sting, for she saw that Alice thought better of her than she deserved, but this feeling humbled her, for she always felt when anyone over-estimated her, that she would try very hard to deserve the good opinion which she knew at the time to be undeserved. So she said directly, "You will enjoy lessons with Fraulein, she is so kind."

"I think everyone is very kind," said Alice.

Jessie laughed.

"Well, I don't exactly agree with you there, Alice, for I think some people are horribly unpleasant ; but you are certainly right about Fraulein."

Alice felt a good deal alarmed as she rang the bell at the school door the first Wednesday afternoon, and the noise it made set her heart beating so fast, that she could scarcely speak when the maid opened it. Alice could never reconcile it with her sense of propriety to say "Fraulein" alone, it sounded so very familiar, and Mrs. Winter, for the same reason, always spoke of her as "Miss Fraulein." Her daughter knew this could not be correct, so that in her anxiety to be perfectly polite, she asked for Miss Schröder, and then she found the maid did not know to whom she alluded.

"The German lady," explained Alice.

"Oh, Fraulein ? yes, miss, she's in the study," and the maid led the way into a very tiny room, with bookshelves all round it, except in one recess by the fire, where was a small piano. The round table was covered with exercises, and Fraulein was busy writing as Alice came in.

She greeted her very kindly, laughed as she showed her a formidable looking exercise, nearly all wrong to judge by the numerous words and sentences scored through with a very determined stroke of the pen ;



"This is my garden," said Marian, "do you like flowers?"—Page 159.



then she began to teach, and Alice came to the end of her lesson very satisfactorily.

"You can do this exercise at home, and learn this, and this," pointing to what she had marked in a little book near her, and then she went with her to the school door.

The garden reached quite up to it, and as Alice came out, a burst of merry laughter greeted her, and turning round, she saw Marian Francis and little Sophy nailing up a refractory branch of the rose-tree trained against the wall. They recognised her at once, and asked her how she was. Then darting up to Fraulein, Sophy said eagerly, "May we take Alice round the garden?"

"By all means; I will come too," and tying her handkerchief over her head, out she came.

"This is my garden," said Marian. "Do you like flowers?"

"Yes, very much."

Marian made immediate use of her knife, and cut off a beautiful white phlox, some scarlet salvia, and her one beloved violet verbena.

Alice received them gratefully. Then Sophy did the honours of her own little piece of ground, and added a spray of drooping crimson fuchsia, some mignonette, and brilliant blue borage, to the treasures already in Alice's hand. The little gardens were very neatly kept, and the two girls found their visitor fully able to

appreciate their merits ; there were six in a row, and the last had a clump of ribbon grass, upon which Sophy cast envious eyes, and then flew off to the other end of the playground, to ask permission of its owner to gather some. The young lady came back with her, and having been one of those who had helped to wheel Alice's chair on the sands at Saltby, expressed herself delighted to see her so much better, and then the three, with Fraulein in their rear, led Alice all over the playground, into the summer-house, where some of the girls were working, out again to the croquet-ground, where Miss Stansfield was doing her best to make a party of six play amicably together, and over all the sun of late September threw a soft glow, as it cast flickering shadows on the grass from the leaves of the old birch-tree by the summer-house, and fell slanting through the tall raspberry canes which bordered the playground on the west.

"It was very pleasant indeed, and there was something in the contact with so much warm young life that was very inspiriting to Alice, and when at last Miss Morgan came out and spoke kindly to her, she felt it was perfect, and in her own affectionate regard for that lady she formed an estimate of the additional pleasure which her presence must bring to her pupils, which was rather wide of the mark ; for though the stately governess had unbent a good deal since the Midsummer holidays, old associations are strong, and

she still inspired more fear than love in the hearts of the young people around her.

As she turned away from the lively groups on the play-ground, Jessie ran up, and as she saw Alice so happy and bright, and noticed that Marian and Sophy seemed on very easy terms with her, the jealous feeling came again with a smarting soreness in her heart, and though she did not show it, there it was and it made her very uncomfortable.

Did she only care for Alice because hitherto she had been everything to her, and, after her own relations, first in her affections? Could she really rightly care for her if when she saw her happy with others, the sight of that happiness displeased her? was she really glad that Alice was stronger, now that she saw that her ability to move about brought her into contact with others beside herself? would she really rather that Alice had continued weak and lame, so that she might be everything to her? These and countless other questions of the kind came quick and strong into Jessie's heart that September night, as she lay in bed, with her curly head hidden beneath the coverings and hot tears falling fast, and yet bringing no relief.

"Jessie, my darling, what is the matter?"

It was her mother's voice. She had entered so quietly that Jessie, covered up as she was, had not

heard her. "What is it, darling?" said Mrs. Marshall again.

At first it was a struggle to tell; her thoughts seemed so wrong, and her heart condemned her so strongly; but that soft hand so tenderly smoothing her hair, and those dear, sweet words which mothers know so well how to use, soon overcame her scruples, and she rested her weary head on her mamma's shoulder and sobbed out her confession.

Mrs. Marshall said little about the sin of jealousy, she thought Jessie was feeling it deeply enough, but she spoke much of that loving Saviour who has left us so wondrous an example of unselfishness, and she told her that truly to serve Him, she must learn to prefer others before herself, and cultivate that charity which envieth not; and what made all this sink very deeply into her little daughter's heart was the assurance that she knew how to feel for her, because she had known what it was to be jealous herself.

"You, mamma, were you ever really jealous?"

"Listen, dear, and I will tell you about it. You know I never had a sister, and that I went away to school very early. I was happy there after a certain fashion till a new girl came—"

"What was her name, mamma?"

"Amelia Curtis; she was always called Milly at school. Well, I must tell you about it, Jessie; she was a tall girl two years older than I was, and you know

among school girls two years makes a great difference. She was very stiff and haughty—frozen—the others said, and no one liked her at all. But I did—more than that, I *loved* her, I studied her every wish, and followed her about devotedly, and whenever (as on rare occasions did happen) she showed by word or sign that she appreciated my attention, I was extremely happy. I know the others thought it foolish of me to think so much of her, and perhaps it was ; I don't know ; but I was sure she had a loving heart if one only could find it. Two years passed, and my persevering attachment had thawed her at last, and I cannot tell you how happy we were together. Some people speak slightly of school-girls' friendships, but I am quite sure of this, that never since I have been grown up have I loved a friend more devotedly than I loved Milly. For some time we were as happy as possible, no one interfered between us—we were all in all to each other. Then a new girl came, Ellen Wright, and although she soon saw that I was Milly's only friend, she thrust herself between us, and at last she won my friend's affections quite away from me, and I had to bear coldness and indifference from the girl whose heart I had thawed only as it seemed that she might lavish her love on some one else. Even now, Jessie, after more than thirty years, I cannot dwell upon the pain that trouble gave me ; I was utterly unhappy. The girls saw how the case stood and were

very kind to me, but nothing seemed to make up for the lost friendship. At last comfort came to me in a way I had not expected, for all my sorrow weighed upon me so, that I became ill and was taken from school for a while, and sent quite away into the country. I could not forget Milly, though she had quite given me up. The place I went to was very quiet, and there were no books but those of a religious kind ; these I shunned at first, but lack of others induced me to read them, and something tangible in them, an idea of something to rest upon which would not change, soothed me very much ; and then I began to read my Bible with a new meaning, and before long I was enabled to rest my troubled heart on the thought of our dear Saviour's love, and that comforted me more than I can tell you. But then, as I began to serve Him, I found, Jessie, that I must forgive Ellen, and feel kindly to Milly, and be willing to see another preferred before me. It was not easy, but God gave me strength, and afterwards, when I went back to school, I had many a hard struggle, but the victory was given to me at last."

"Dear mamma !" said Jessie, holding her mother very tightly.

"I do not mean to say, darling, that your case and mine are similar, because to a certain extent they are quite different ; but you are like your mother in throwing all your heart into what you care for at all,

and I think, dearest, if you let this little warning do its work, it may save you much trouble. Pray for unselfishness, my darling, and *cultivate* it, throwing yourself in the background and thinking of others first. It may seem odd to you, but at last I really was able to be glad that Milly and Ellen were friends, because I think Ellen was more likely to suit her than I was, and feeling that her friendship was more for Milly's happiness than mine would have been, I became reconciled at last, after a hard struggle."

"I think it was horridly unkind of both of them ; I can't think how you ever forgave them."

"God helps us to do many difficult things, which sometimes seem impossible, and so, dearest, do not despair ; only try to keep

" ' A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathise,'

and ask for help ; it will surely be given. It does not do, my darling child, to rest too much on anything earthly, however good in itself it may be. To love God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, that is what we must aim at ; and God is faithful, He will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear ; so take courage, dear child."

"Yes, mamma ; thank you."

Then Jessie lay down, and her mother left her after a loving good night,

True, indeed, are the words of Scripture, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

After this, when Alice talked delightedly of the pleasure her French lessons gave her, or spoke of any kindness she had received, Jessie checked the uncomfortable thoughts which would enter her heart, with the thought, "If I really love Alice I shall delight in what pleases her;" and all these efforts made in God's strength did their work in time; and making use of every little incident in her daily life to help her on in the service of her Saviour, she really grew in grace, and as her parents and Miss Morgan watched her progress, they remembered that it is said of the Lord's people, "They go from strength to strength."

And Alice was also growing in her experience of God's love, and in the knowledge of how much happiness there is in the world, even for those afflicted as she was, but she would never have recognised it had she made this world her all. No! when rightly we realise our high calling as children of God and heirs of salvation, then only can we rightly estimate the trials of this life, and say quietly and with calm assurance, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

All this time the school-plan was kept a profound secret; with the exception of Mr. Eaton no one knew of it, beyond Jessie and her parents and Alice's

mother and sister. As the winter drew on Jessie had many conversations with her mamma on the subject, and when Mr. Marshall said he saw no reason why Alice should not commence it at Easter, his wife thought it would be as well if the project were mentioned, in order to give people time to think before deciding about sending their children to Alice, so Jessie went in high glee to tell the doctor's opinion.

"Work first, pleasure afterwards," was a motto she was eagerly trying to remember, so she conscientiously finished the sums and the heavier portion of the hour's work before entering on the subject; but no sooner was she set at liberty than she said, joyously, "Alice, what *do* you think? papa says he thinks you will be well enough to begin your school at Easter!"

"At Easter? oh, Miss Jessie, does he really? how nice! but I never thought of beginning it till next Midsummer."

"I know; but papa thinks Easter would be best, because he says you are sure to find the first quarter rather fatiguing, and it would be better for you to have the Midsummer holidays after the end of three months than to have the whole half year from July till Christmas without a break—don't you see?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Jessie, I see; but do you think I should be ready—in my learning—I mean?"

"Mamma thought if you didn't mind she would tell Miss Morgan about it, and perhaps she would

examine you a little and see," said Jessie. "She will be a better judge than *I* am, though I am sure you have worked most wonderfully well, and *I* think you are quite up to it."

Sad to relate, lessons languished after that little conversational interlude, and the girls were chattering together about forms, and stoves, and books, and all manner of things scholastic, when suddenly Miss Morgan walked in.

"You here, Jessie! Well, Alice, is she talking you to death?"

"Oh, no, ma'am ; thank you."

Both girls blushed a deep red ; they had never yet been caught in the midst of lessons, and it would be hard to say which felt most confused.

Miss Morgan looked at the sums and noticed the neatness of an exercise lying open on the table, and then said, "You must be clever enough, Alice, to teach others by this time ; do you know, I have often thought how nice it would be if you had a little day-school."

Jessie seized Miss Morgan and kissed her vehemently, a proceeding so unusual that it was difficult to understand at first. Alice's "Do you really think so, ma'am ?" threw a little light on the subject, and she said as well as she could for Jessie's embrace, "It is not a new idea, then ?"

"Oh, dear, no ! we've thought of it ever since last

April, the twelfth was the day—how well I remember it! Alice has been working so hard, and there's a room at the back, and papa says she will be strong enough by Easter, and Mr. Eaton says there are heaps of children; and oh! dear Miss Morgan, I am so glad you are come, we want to consult you. It has been a profound secret up to this very afternoon—that is to say, Mrs. Winter knew it, and Miss Winter, and papa, and mamma, and Mr. Eaton, but that's all; and oh! Alice, may I tell all about John Fry?"

"John Fry? are you going wild, Jessie?"

"Oh, no! may I, Alice?"

"Yes, Miss Jessie, anything you like."

So Jessie and Alice together told the whole story, and Miss Morgan, sitting between them, entered into it thoroughly, and was altogether so nice and sympathising that Jessie felt for the first time she really loved her, and that was a step gained.

"I think it an excellent plan and sure to succeed, with God's blessing," she said, kindly, laying a hand on Alice's, and drawing Jessie closer to her; "sure to succeed; and now tell me if I can help you at all."

"If you would examine Alice and see if she is fit," said Jessie, "we should be so much obliged."

"Yes, with pleasure. To-morrow, Alice, you will come for your French lesson; when that is over, I will examine you to your heart's content. Will that do?"

"Yes, indeed, ma'am, thank you."

"It would be a good plan for it to be mentioned in the Christmas holidays. Mrs. White—I am sure her children want teaching, they are tumbling about the shop all hours of the day; Mrs. Franklin's too."

"Mr. Eaton thought of them," said Alice, and Jessie added, that both papa and Mr. Eaton meant to recommend the school, and asked "if Miss Morgan would do so too?"

The lady smiled, "I think I may safely do so, but in my character of examiner I suppose I must wait till to-morrow's ordeal has been gone through. Which is the school-room?" and then Alice opened the door and called her mother.

Mrs. Winter looked very pleased as Miss Morgan said warmly, "What a good plan it was," and then they went in a body to the room at the back of the toy-shop.

"Capital!" said Miss Morgan, when Alice explained about the curtain; then turning she added, "I have a pair of green baize curtains I had made for the side passage, before the study was built; I do not think they are at all the worse; if you would allow me, Mrs. Winter, I should be glad to give them to Alice."

It was a kind offer, and so courteously made that Mrs. Winter felt no scruple in accepting it at once, and Jessie's delight, though more out-spoken, was not at all more sincere than Alice's.

"That entrance is just the thing ; you will want a double row of hooks by the wall, for the children to hang up their hats ; and that window being so high is a great advantage, they cannot possibly look out into the street." This last little speech was so like the Miss Morgan of old times, that Jessie wondered to hear her next remark, "The room is very cold, you must have a stove or fire-place."

Jessie thought over these two sentences, and came to the conclusion that Miss Morgan did not really grudge what was pleasant, but only objected to what was likely to be a hindrance to lessons.

"A few forms and a table are all you want at first ; it is a very comfortable room, and this little passage between it and the parlour most usefully cuts off the communication of noise ;" and then Miss Morgan had finished her survey.

CHAPTER XI.

BUSINESS.

"GOOD morning, Mrs. White," said Mr. Eaton, as he entered the butcher's shop one cold morning; "is your husband better?"

"Thank you, sir, yes. Will you please to walk in? he'll be glad to see you."

The clergyman entered the little parlour by the side of the shop, where Mr. White was sitting in an arm-chair, looking very weak and ill, after a severe attack of rheumatic fever. There were three children playing about, and it was plain enough to see, though their father made no complaint, that their noise nearly distracted him. On the entrance of Mr. Eaton, they were summarily turned into the shop, with a caution not to play with the knives, the bare suggestion of which seemed horrible to the clergyman.

"Why don't you send them to school?" he asked.

Mr. Eaton had really come with the intention of

sounding the butcher and his wife on this subject, but he had not expected to meet with so favourable an opportunity for recommending Alice, and the question escaped him most naturally.

"There's no school to send them to," was the answer wearily given by the suffering man. "The infant-school's too far off, and if it wasn't, it isn't what I should care to send 'em to, begging your pardon, sir."

This finishing clause bore reference to the supposition that there existed a strong link of interest between the clergyman and everything which he superintended, and that to speak disparagingly of one, was a slight to the other; but Mr. Eaton did not take it at all in that light; he merely asked if they would send them to a school nearer home?

"Yes, sir, thankfully, if there was such a place."

"Miss Winter at the toy-shop means to open a day-school at Easter, I know."

"What! that poor little deformed thing?" exclaimed Mrs. White.

"Yes, she is much stronger than she was, and Miss Morgan says she is quite fitted for the post, so I think she cannot do better."

"What age is she, sir? she looks but a child. But there, when poor creatures are so afflicted, it's hard to tell how old they are."

"She is nearly seventeen."

"She's a well-mannered little thing, I'll say that for her," said the butcher's wife, as if it was necessary to find out all that was commendable in one so different from other girls.

"And a plucky one, too," added the butcher. "It isn't so easy to go along as if nothing was the matter, when people all turn to look, and the boys make remarks, as I've known 'em to do on that poor girl, when she first began to go about last summer."

"They don't feel it; that's what I always say, and a mercy it is," said Mrs. White.

"There I think you make a mistake," said Mr. Eaton, kindly. "I think she does feel it very much; but there are two ways of meeting trials, and Alice Winter accepts hers patiently, because she knows that her life is as her heavenly Father willed it, and therefore is for the best."

"Ah, well, poor girl! she's need of some consolation. What do you say, master, shall the bairns go?"

"Ay, and welcome, if the charge suits. What's it likely to be, sir?"

"That I do not know; but if Mrs. White would call on Miss Winter, that could soon be settled; but she does not begin till Easter."

"Two whole months," said the butcher, wearily.

"Perhaps the snow will soon go," said Mr. Eaton, "then they can get out more."

"My sister offered for them to go there for a bit,

while my husband get's better ; but I'd thought for them to go when better weather comes, but if she's in the same mind, I'll send 'em there next Tuesday."

"That would be a very good plan," and then Mr. Eaton began to talk on other subjects.

Mrs. White was a great talker, and the clergyman could not have placed the school in the hands of a better advertiser, and this no doubt he had been quite aware of. He mentioned it (not with much eagerness) to several others that day ; he spoke about it in a matter-of-course way, because he knew very well that to insist upon the necessity for a day-school, and to recommend it very earnestly would most likely have the effect of deterring people from trying it, so he simply mentioned it, and left the idea to work in the minds of his hearers.

As to Mrs. White, her mind was full of it, and she soon had an opportunity of imparting it, for the shop-bell rang just after Mr. Eaton left, and Mrs. Shepherd from the china-shop entered to make a purchase.

"Have you heard of this new school that is to be, Mrs. Shepherd?"

"No ; what sort ? Who is going to keep it ?"

"Miss Winter, at the toy-shop ; she begins at Easter ; Mr. Eaton recommends her, and if the charge suits, we mean to send our three."

"That poor deformed girl !" exclaimed Mrs. Shepherd, as the butcher's wife had exclaimed before her.

"Yes ; but she's older than you'd think, and seems a likely sort of person. I mean to call there this afternoon."

"I'll go with you, if you don't mind, for that Joey of mine worrits the life out of me, in and out as he is among the pots. Come to think of it now, have they room in yon house?"

"Well, we'd best go and see, so you be ready by three this afternoon, and I'll be dressed to go with you. If things suit, it will be a weight off my mind."

It was well that Alice had taken counsel with Mrs. Marshall and Miss Morgan, and was prepared to state ten shillings a quarter as her charge for each pupil, for two such early applications were quite unexpected, and she felt extremely nervous, and glad to have the interview over. It was satisfactory to her, however, and both Mrs. White and Mrs. Shepherd seemed well pleased with the prospect, only regretting that she was not going to begin at once.

And so for some little time in Beckford, the new school that was to be was quite the first topic of interest amongst anxious mothers and fathers. It was well that Alice did not hear the endless discussions about the terms, with the numberless instances brought forward to prove that in other schools of the kind, eight and sixpence or nine shillings had been charged, but seldom ten, and that extra eighteenpence made the balance against Alice tremble mightily.

For those who were at liberty to do so, it was really curious to observe how the additional sum rose in importance as the subject was talked about over and over again, and what might be bought with the shilling or eighteenpence saved, seemed a most conclusive testimony to the truth of a favourite idea of careful people that "a little money can be made to go a long way."

"Six shillings at the end of the year! why, it would nearly find a child in shoes," said one economical parent.

"Or books. Those day-schools charge up for stationery, as they call it," remarked a second.

"Call it four shillings," said another, "that would buy a new hat, trimming and all, or a frock. Yes, it's a large sum."

Then, too, Mrs. White was accused of giving herself airs, because she had been the first to know of the school. This led to inquiries (rather wide of the immediate subject) about Mrs. White's family and friends, one of whom had been known to be in service some years ago, and therefore why need Mrs. White take upon herself to hold her head so high as she did, with her chignon and a thick plait, which all the world might see was false? That was a point on which Mrs. Franklin would like to be informed, and her own abundant black ringlets, which anyone not absolutely blind could see to be all real, seemed to bear out

the justice of her wishes to be satisfied on this matter.

Alice happily was ignorant of all the talk her project caused, and they had made so few acquaintances in Beckford that no kindly gossip had the opportunity of bringing to the toy-shop all the little worrying details which would assuredly have disturbed her peace of mind as well as her mother's. She was fully occupied, working hard with Jessie and Fraulein, besides netting and executing other orders which she was anxious to get through so as to have ready-money to pay for her forms and the table necessary for the school-room. It was now nearly the middle of February, and she hoped to go with her mother in a few days to the furniture shop and make their selection.

"You look wonderfully bright," said Jessie one afternoon as she entered the parlour.

"Read that, Miss Jessie, and you will wonder no longer," and she placed before her a letter in a masculine hand.

Jessie read, and expressed her opinion that it was one of the kindest letters she had ever seen, and so without doubt it was. John Fry was the writer of it, and he said Alice must allow him to show his gratitude for his share in the benefit of her scheme by providing all the forms and desks necessary for the school-room, adding "and be sure you have a little *three form* ; I remember when I was a very small atom in

socks, sitting on a little form between two other atoms, and very happy we used to be ; so don't forget that."

"Oh, what fun, Alice ; yes, of course you must have the little three-form and everything else—has he really sent you all that ?" as Alice displayed a five pound note.

"Yes ; truly—is he not kind ?"

"When shall you go about the things ? do go soon."

"Yes ; mother thinks there is no good in waiting, so we mean to go this evening ; only fancy how little I shall have to buy compared with what I calculated."

"Well, I suppose we must set to work ; but really it is so much easier to talk, it gets quite exciting now. I should not see about a stove, if I were you, Alice, at present at least—not till you see what the other things cost."

"No ; mother thinks that can wait a little ; it will be getting warm by Easter."

"Now for Dr. Brewer. I am sure his 'Guide to Science' will reduce us to order if anything can. 'Why is the sky blue ?' that's a charming little question to answer, isn't it ?"

That evening whilst Mrs. Winter and Alice were looking at tables, and calculating prices in the warehouse at the back of the furniture-shop, Mr. Marshall was making inquiries for Jessie about the stove upon which she had set her heart, and for which she had

been saving up her money for some months. She was very much delighted when he told her he thought it would be just what was needed, only something would have to be done to the room, as there must be an iron pipe in default of a chimney, but including that, the price would still be within the compass of her means, and so the stove was decided upon.

"Oh, Miss Jessie, it really is too much," said Alice when she heard of it, and she shed a few happy tears; "everything seems made so easy for me," she added.

"Oh, you will have plenty of hard work," said Mrs. Marshall, "don't be afraid; and it makes Jessie so happy to be able to help a little."

"Can you get the forms and table for the five pounds?" inquired Jessie.

"Yes: a table, two long forms, and the little form, and the double row of hooks as well; and what is over just pays for inkstands. The forms and table have to be made, but I can have them by the middle of March."

"That's right; oh! Alice, I do so long to see you 'monarch of all you survey.'"

It would be scarcely possible for any lady to take greater pleasure in the arrangement of her drawing-room than did Alice in the setting out of her school-room. The floor had been well scrubbed, the window cleaned, and a neat muslin blind put before it; the

green curtain was hung from side to side and concealed her Bath-chair and the various packing-cases; the stove was at the other end. In the middle of the room stood a long table, with leaves which could be let down to make desks; the long forms stood one on each side, while by the stove, conveniently near to the mistress's chair (which was an ordinary one from the parlour), was placed the little *three-form* which John had insisted upon. When everything was arranged nicely, Miss Morgan and Fraulein were invited to see it, and Jessie and Alice were much gratified by their expressions of satisfaction. A note came the same evening from Miss Morgan, which seemed rather strange as she had been there so recently. Alice opened it and read—

“The Grove, Beckford,

“Thursday Evening.

“DEAR ALICE,

“Both Fraulein and I consider your school-room perfect, except in one respect. The young ladies, thinking beforehand that you would very likely neglect this one matter of importance, had decided upon presenting you with a chair for yourself, but would not send it until I was able to inform them that you needed it before anything else.

“They now beg your acceptance of the arm-chair, which you will receive this evening, with their best

wishes for your success in your praiseworthy undertaking.

"They hope you will find the chair comfortable, and little Miss Sophy wishes me to say that she looks forward some day to seeing you in it; and she hopes that your pupils will not give you much trouble, and make your head ache.

" Believe me, dear Alice,

" Your true friend,

" BARBARA MORGAN."

The next day Alice wrote in reply—

" Market Place, Beckford.

" Friday Morning,

" MY DEAR MADAM,

"It is quite impossible for me to tell the young ladies how much I feel their kindness. The chair is beautiful and exceedingly comfortable, and I shall be much obliged if you will give them my most sincere thanks for their truly kind and thoughtful present. We have placed it by the stove, and if Miss Sophy and the other young ladies would like to see how it looks, I can only say I shall be most happy to see them.

" Again thanking them very much indeed,

" I am, my dear Madam,

" Yours very gratefully,

" ALICE WINTER."

Accordingly that afternoon the whole body of fourteen girls invaded the toy-shop precincts, and very great was the pleasure testified at the sight of everything so neat and nice, and the arm-chair, with its soft cushions and pretty chintz cover, was exactly suited to Alice, and she looked very comfortable when the girls installed her in it that they might fancy her sitting in state.

As to Robin, all he could say when he first saw the room was that, "it was real handsome ; and he hoped they young 'uns wouldn't be too much for Miss Alice."

Jessie had so entirely conquered her selfishness with regard to her pupil that she was able thoroughly to enter into the pleasure which the last most welcome present had given, and did not grudge her schoolfellows any of the affectionate gratitude which she saw Alice bestow on them.

The Wednesday in Easter week was the day fixed for the opening of the school, and when the young untried teacher awoke that morning, it was with a feeling of great responsibility and some amount of distrust of her own powers. The promise, "He giveth liberally," helped her to hope as she prayed for wisdom in her new path of duty, that it would be given her, and she was ready with a quiet mind for the reception of her little scholars at nine o'clock.

In they came—one after the other—some with

mothers, others under the charge of elder sisters, who left them with a warning "to behave," after speaking a few words to Alice. There were ten children in all, the eldest of whom was nine—the rest of all ages, from four upwards. There they stood, all in a group, looking considerably frightened; and they made a great amount of noise and shuffling, as Alice called over the names and placed them by ages in a semi-circle. She had thought of beginning the day's work by reading a chapter in the Bible or a psalm, but with so many little ones this seemed out of the question, so she asked them if they could sing

"There is a happy land,
Far, far away."

Finding that some of them knew it, she began to sing it, and very soon they all joined in; most of them knew the tune, and a few had some idea of the words, and altogether it was very well for a first attempt.

"You must learn what you don't know of it by to-morrow," she said to the elder ones, and one of them offered to teach it to the little ones, so that point was happily settled. Then Alice spoke to them a little about the Happy Land, and talked in simple language which the youngest could understand, of the Good Shepherd, who loves His little lambs, and is ever ready to lead them to that bright world where He has gone before; and then she told them all to sit down and she would see what they could do.



'It was difficult to find employment for the six who could not read, but she set them all to copying A B C in printing letters on their slates.'—*Page 185.*

The first strangeness had worn off, and the little pupils showed signs of restlessness long before their teacher had arranged their tasks. She found that only four could read, and that but very indifferently; however she made a class of them, at which they stared and laughed and looked anything but studious. Not one of them could write, and only two owned to a knowledge of the multiplication table. Under these circumstances it was difficult to find employment for the six who could not read, but she set them all to copying A B C, in printed letters on their slates, and then began the reading. Afterwards she set the readers an addition sum each, and took the little ones in hand, but it is not to be wondered at that when twelve o'clock came, she was exceedingly tired and very much confused as regards the best means of instructing her flock, and at the same time preventing the din which was so distracting.

The afternoon was even worse, for some of the little girls brought needlework to do, and Alice was surprised to find how difficult it seemed for little fingers to hold a needle properly; and Mrs. Shepherd's Joey seemed to find much pleasure in pulling the work out of the girls' hands when Alice's back was turned, so that there was a constant threading of needles. Then one of the thimbles was lost, and all the party joined in the search with great alacrity and enjoyment, so that when Jessie came into the parlour soon after

four, she found Alice with a flushed face and unmistakable signs of headache, which there was no hiding effectually, though she tried to look cheerful in answer to Jessie's inquiry, "Well, how have you got on?"

It was disappointing to find the children had been so difficult to manage, and that the first day of school had not come up either to her own expectations or Alice's. Besides, it seemed quite impossible for Alice to read with such a headache, and for this, as a consequence of five hours in the school-room, Jessie had not calculated. But she encouraged Alice to talk over her difficulties, and then suggested dividing both morning and afternoon into portions of twenty minutes or half-an-hour each, and fixing what each child should do in them.

At this Alice brightened, and Jessie, who was well up in school rules, was a great help to her, so that between them they drew up a very clear and suitable time-table, which Alice said she would copy out in large letters on a sheet of cardboard, and hang up in the school-room.

"How did you find Alice?" asked Mrs. Marshall, as Jessie settled little Lucy in her high chair by the tea-table.

"Oh, so dreadfully tired; those horrid children had been regular little plagues. Alice had such a headache, she could not read."

"I am sorry for that ; but you must remember how quiet her life has been hitherto, and she will have to feel her way and not expect too much while she is getting the children into order ; it will be easier in time."

"I wonder if it would help her with the little children, if she had a box of letters like Lucy's?"

"I should think it would very much ; but one set would not be enough. Don't you think you could print some on cardboard ? I dare say Fred would help you."

"What's that about me?" asked the young gentleman in question, who just then came in with his brothers.

"I was saying I thought you would help Jessie to print a set of letters for Alice Winter's little scholars."

"Jolly ! When do you want them ?"

"Oh, as soon as you like."

"Can't I do some ?" asked George.

"If you won't blot, I should be very glad," said Jessie.

"All right ; I'll run to the shop for some cardboard after tea, and we'll set to work ; we can get a whole lot done to-night."

"Oh, thank you, Fred."

"Oh, I'm a great advocate for 'teaching the young idea' by easy means, especially when the work's so

pleasant," and that wise speech of Fred's made Jessie laugh, and in devising the means for lightening Alice's toils the brothers and sister spent a very happy evening, and finished the letters before they went to bed.

CHAPTER XII.

SUCCESS.

THE letters were a great help to Alice, and with the aid of a judicious use of her time-table, she had at the end of a fortnight reduced her fidgety little party to something like order. But it was still hard work, and lessons with Jessie flagged very much, for Alice was always tired, and though she still read and worked sums, and studied geography, she seemed often dull and heavy, and the work lacked the spring and interest which had hitherto given it such enjoyment. It troubled Jessie very much, and one day she said to her mother, "Mamma, I can't think what is the matter with Alice, she always has a headache, and seems so tired."

Mrs. Marshall had her own opinion as to the cause of the headaches, but she only said, "Does she go out every day?"

"Yes; at least when it's fine, she goes for a walk

when school is over till dinner-time, and every evening Robin takes her in the chair ; but I feel quite unhappy about her ; she has not been like herself since she began the school : it is very disappointing."

"So it is, dear ; shall I ask papa to see her ?"

"If you would, please ; it worries me very much."

That evening Mr. Marshall came in just as Jessie was going to bed.

"I have been to see Alice," he said.

"Well, papa, what do you think ?"

"That you mustn't overdo her with lessons, Jessie ; the school is as much as she can do with at present."

"Oh, papa, must I give up teaching her ?"

Jessie looked so very sad at the bare idea of this, that Mr. Marshall felt very sorry to say what nevertheless seemed to him right.

"You know, my dear, that teaching little children for five hours a day is really hard work, especially for a girl who is not very strong. It takes a good deal out of one to be always talking, and the noise, which can scarcely be avoided, is very trying. Then Alice is a conscientious teacher, and consequently very anxious to do her best and see improvement, and being new to the work, perhaps she expects rather too much at first. I don't wonder that she feels very tired when four o'clock comes."

"Do you think it will do her harm ?"

"Not if she rests afterwards ; but I should think

she does not come fresh and brisk to lessons as formerly, does she ?”

“ Oh, dear no ; it is quite different.”

“ Well, my opinion is, and I said the same to Mrs. Winter, that when she comes out of the school-room in the afternoon, she ought not to study at all. She may read an interesting book, or go to sleep on the sofa if she can, or better still, go for a stroll in the fields, and rest her mind. I don’t think in that case the teaching would hurt her ; but she will do no good with learning when she is tired.”

Jessie looked very grave indeed.

“ She was getting on so nicely,” she said.

“ She has a whole holiday on Saturday. Would it hurt her if Jessie went for an hour only on that afternoon ?” asked her mamma.

“ That would be a very different thing. No, I think that could safely be done ; but decidedly it must be dropped for the other days.”

“ I don’t know how I shall tell Alice, she will think it so unkind.”

“ No, she won’t ; Mrs. Winter said they would have mentioned it, only they thought it would seem ungrateful to you. But I told them Alice’s welfare was what you cared for, so you need not be afraid of telling Alice. What ! tears, Jessie ? a young lady of fourteen in tears !”

Jessie brushed them hastily away, and kissing her father and mother, went to her room.

It was a great relief to Alice when she found she could obey the doctor's orders, sorry as she felt to give up the daily lessons with her dear Miss Jessie. But she was always so very tired, they had quite lost their charm, and now she felt she could do very well with Saturday's hour, and working up in the evenings. Fraulein still kept up the French lesson once a week, and Jessie grew reconciled to the change as she saw Alice her bright self again ; and sometimes when she accompanied her in her four o'clock stroll, she was greatly amused by the young school-mistress's accounts of her pupils, and her active brain suggested many plans by which both they and Alice were benefited.

One day, with many apologies and thanks, Mrs. Winter told Mrs. Marshall she should feel more comfortable herself to pay Robin for his services, instead of taxing the good doctor's kindness any longer. Mrs. Marshall knew that her husband considered it no tax, but she also quite understood the commendable feeling of independence on the part of the widow, so she said it should be so in future, adding that she hoped she had found the shop remunerative during the year she had been at Beckford.

" Yes, ma'am, thank you ; on the whole it has done well, and we've tided over the worst difficulties. There was one trouble we could not see our way through—a debt of between six and seven pounds we had in-

curred in the way of business ; but when everyone was so kind in furnishing Alice's room for her, she brought me her savings, which she said were not needed, and they just set us straight ; so now we can go on with free minds, thank God."

"I think the school seems nice for her, and not too much, now she is not worried with study after it."

"Yes, ma'am, indeed we are quite contented ; and she takes such pains, I think she can't fail to give satisfaction. I'm sure it is quite impossible to thank dear Miss Jessie for helping her to a livelihood."

So the headaches subsided in time, and Joey grew less restive, as he found occupation for his lively young mind ; and by degrees Alice learnt something fresh, and that was, that it is not only in suffering, but also in doing that God is willing to help His children : and as she rested her cares on His Almighty arm, she grew less anxious and had a mind free to teach, and to do her best in the duty before her, instead of worrying about how it would turn out. Now and then Mrs. Marshall and Jessie, or Miss Morgan, or Fraulein and Miss Stansfield, with one or other of the young ladies, would come to see how she was getting on ; and when the first quarter was over, the holidays came with an unknown freshness to Alice, and she rested and recruited her powers most happily.

When they were ended, and her work began again,

she had several additions to her number, and as two of the new comers were older than the others, and fairly advanced in their lessons, her work grew still more interesting, while experience came to her aid in the management of the tiny occupants of the "three-form," and she proved herself to be a very patient and sensible teacher.

Long before this Jessie had begun to devote her hour which Alice no longer needed to the instruction of little Lucy, and very pleasant she found it ; and still more delightful was it to know she was helping her dear mother, and that at school she was no longer quoted as an example of idleness, but that Miss Morgan trusted her fully, and entered into all her reasonable fancies.

Meanwhile, not only at Beckford, but in Mr. Green's house of business at Norwich, and at the old water-mill in the meadows near Allanmede, there were two hearts very much interested in the well-doing of the little school behind the toy-shop. There was some time to wait still, but when a year and a half had gone, John began to furnish the old house, and at last the wedding was fixed for the 28th of June.

No one besides the doctor's family and Miss Morgan, whom Jessie had told in confidence, knew what part Alice had had in bringing about this happy event ; but everyone was ready to be pleased and sympathise in the happiness of the Winter family.

Merrily rang the Beckford bells, and softly shone the June sunshine on the fresh green grass as John and Charlotte Fry came out of the shadow of the grey church porch.

There were many looking on, but no one more heartily rejoiced than Jessie, who in her childish days had done what she could for another's welfare, and was now able to see the reward. It brought a strange sweet feeling of hope and gladness to the heart of the young girl of sixteen as she thought how God blesses little efforts, and she was more than ever resolved with His help to let slip no opportunity of doing good which came in her way; and not even Alice was happier than she was on Charlotte's wedding-day.

* * * * *

A year passed by, and Midsummer came round again; and one fine morning Miss Morgan, Jessie, and Alice all met on the platform at the railway station on their way south to Allanmede. Jessie had never been beyond Lincoln in her life, and everything was delightfully fresh and pleasant to her as the train whirled them past green fields and woods and quiet homesteads. She was ready with a quotation from Shakespeare as Leicester brought Wolsey to her mind, and Miss Morgan responded; then the approach of Bedford suggested John Bunyan, and she was wondering in which direction Elstow lay when the train flew

past the station, and her expectations fell to the ground. Presently St. Albans came in sight, and they had scarcely done discussing the old abbey and Verulam, and Britain's earliest martyr, when tall chimneys and a smoky sky warned them that they were near London, and presently the first stage of their journey was ended.

London was equally new to the two girls, and Miss Morgan took care that the three days spent there should combine as much sight-seeing as was compatible with time and strength, and then they all set out for Allamede.

The diminutive omnibus was in waiting, and a very comfortable gig into which John Fry, who was in attendance, carefully packed Alice after handing Miss Morgan and Jessie into the omnibus. The gig drove off first, and soon left the omnibus far behind; but Jessie did not object to the slow pace, for Miss Morgan pointed out so many objects of interest that the distance of four miles between the station and Allamede was all too short for what she wanted to see. As they crossed the bridge and Miss Morgan pointed out the water-mill, a fluttering handkerchief told them that Alice had safely arrived, and then the two ladies went up the hill to the post-office, where their rooms were ready, and a glad reception awaited them, for the good post-mistress had not forgotten Miss Morgan's visit four years ago.

It was a very happy holiday indeed. Alice with her sister and brother at the water-mill, and Jessie half way up the High Street, enjoyed it in an equal measure, while to Miss Morgan it was a time of restful happiness, such as her life had seldom known. Jessie was wild with delight at the lovely views which she came upon in all her walks so unexpectedly. Little peeps of wonderful beauty, sea and sky, and quiet meadow which every break in the trees of the fine, old park revealed. The stately castle, with its ancient keep, and the beautiful church rising from a mass of foliage of the darkest green, which alone was pleasure enough to look upon when sitting by the river bank. Yet what beauty there was too, in the winding river itself with its yellow flags and rustling sedges, and how calm and quiet the old ruins looked, upon which they were always coming when Jessie least expected, and whose hoary grandeur, softened with velvety moss and lichens and adorned with snapdragons and other wall-loving plants, impressed her very much. Then two days were spent at Deepwater, and the furze-covered cliffs and beautiful green sward dipping down in a state of exquisite wildness to the very water's edge, wore an aspect of sea-side beauty to which Jessie, with ideas limited to the Saltby coast, was entirely new. There were happy days spent at Miss Daventry's, or with the grandchildren of Miss Morgan's other old schoolfellows; and Jessie, whose

visits to the water-mill were frequent, saw, in company with Alice, many a well-loved spot of which she had told her in the Winters' first days at Beckford. That was a month of perfect enjoyment to all concerned, but it came to an end at last, and one chilly, wet evening, late in July, Jessie sat by the fire at home and recounted her adventures with an eloquent tongue. When left alone with her mother, she suddenly said,

"Mamma, I cannot understand about Miss Morgan ; she used to be as hard upon us when we were tiresome as it was possible to be, and so bitter and sharp in her remarks about people and things, and now I think she is so sweet, and tender, and kind, I love her dearly."

"You know how beautiful an apple-tree is in early-spring, when it is in bloom ?"

"Yes ; I don't think there is anything prettier ; but what has that to do with Miss Morgan ?"

"Patience, Jessie ! No doubt you have tasted the little apples which drop off, when they are no bigger than cherries ?"

"Yes ; nasty, tasteless little things."

"Later still, in your great hurry to eat them before they were ripe, have you not set your teeth into one that was very hard, and tasted of nothing but bitterness and sourness combined ?"

"Certainly : oh, do go on, mamma, though I think I see what you mean."

"A little longer and all the sun and rain that have been combining to bring the apple to perfection see their work completed, and a sweet, ripe, delicious fruit hangs ready to be gathered."

"Yes ; yes ; and you think it is like Miss Morgan ?"

"I think, Jessie, that when people are hard and bitter, we should be charitable enough to think they are passing through a stage of development which will bring them at last to sweetness and perfection. I do not say it is always so ; if the sunshine is lacking, the fruit may never ripen, but remain bitter and distasteful till it falls to the ground. And so it is only when God's smile turns bitterness to sweetness that the true worth of the Christian character is seen ; but then, my child, when the warmth of that blessed influence is felt, all bitterness passes away. I think some hearts ripen into sweetness sooner than others, and one person can never be a rule for another. Spring's blossoms and autumn's fruits are each equally beautiful, but there must be an intermediate time ; and if, when it comes, with cares and dulness, and feelings of regret, it brings with it steady confidence in the warmth of God's love and His power to perfect that which concerneth us, it will be all right, and autumn's store will be full and perfect."

Jessie sat quite still for a little while, and then she said, "It reminds me of a calm sunset after a stormy day—and 'at evening-tide there shall be light.'"

"Yes, dear child, whatever life brings with it, all will be well, if only we keep near to God ; so long as the branch is part of the vine, nothing can harm it. There may be trying stages in our growth, but if we look to the end, we can take courage, and for all our sorrows God will give us a bountiful harvest of joys."

"Was it your own idea about the apples, mamma?"

"I think I have read something like it, but where I cannot say."

"I never thought I should be sorry to leave school, but I really am ; only there is one thing, my music lessons will take me there once a week, so that it won't seem like giving up everything. Oh, there is papa ! and how late it is—half-past ten."

Alice has grown quite strong since she came to Beckford, and now very seldom uses her crutches. Robin still wheels her to the woods, and confides to her his troubles with Mrs. McIntosh, which seem ceaseless, for she has set up a conservatory which tries his powers of endurance to the utmost limit, because, as he says, "she will not see the fitness of things."

Mrs. Winter finds her shop profitable, and there is no longer need for the green curtain in the school-room, as the packing-cases and Bath-chair have had to be stowed away elsewhere to make room for fresh pupils. Alice has thirty now, and Mrs. Franklin, as she shakes her black curls, still righteously indignant

at the chignon and false plait which Mrs. White continues to wear, says, "Sixty pounds a year clear! only think! well, some has to work in one way and some another, but to me it seems easily come by," an opinion she might quickly alter if she changed places with Alice.

At the Grove, there is as happy a band of school-girls as even Miss Morgan herself could desire to see. Fraulein was married a year or two since, and lives now in Germany once more; but Miss Stansfield still has to look occasionally and see that Sophy does not go back into untidy habits; and in the doctor's house our friends go on in their quiet way. Jessie, the refuge of her brothers and little Lucy in all their troubles, her mother's dear companion and her father's delight.

But one and all in Beckford—from Mr. Eaton to good old Robin—own to a genuine feeling of friendly interest which has its centre in the cheerful little schoolmistress and her thirty pupils, in the long old-fashioned room behind the toy-shop.

THE END.



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